



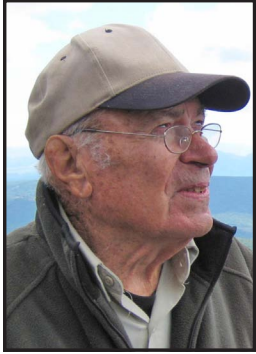
THE MAIL BAG

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RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR



RALPH BELL, LONG-TIME BBC MEMBER, PASSES

Ralph K. Bell, 99, of Clarksville, Pennsylvania, died Tuesday, May 20, 2014, in his home.

He was born January 27, 1915 at home on the Bell Family Farm, in Clarksville, PA, a son of the late Harold Kennedy Bell and Harriett Gaddis Luse. The Bell and Luse families were among the first settlers of Greene County.

Bell was a 1938 graduate of Penn State University. On September 2, 1939, he married Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Kern

(from State College) and they owned and operated the Bell Farm, raising chickens, sheep, and Christmas trees.

Surviving are two children, David Kern Bell and his wife Ruth of State College, and Joan Bell Pattison and her husband Donald of Fort Myers, FL; two grandsons, Cristian David Bell and his wife Leah, and Luke David Pattison. Deceased in addition to his wife, Betty, who died October 16, 1995, are his brother, Frank Heaton Bell; his sister, Esther Bell Tuckish Cordray; and his grandson, Grant Charles Pattison.

Ralph was a member of the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club; Eastern Bird Banding Association; Brooks Bird Club; Izaak Walton League; Three Rivers Birding Club; PA Society for Ornithology; Purple Martin Conservation Society and many other organizations.

He founded the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO), September 18, 1958. AFMO is the oldest, continuous running bird banding station in North America. In 2002, on site at AFMO, Dolly Sods, WV, the West Virginia Public Broadcasting System, filmed a documentary of Mr. Bell regarding his founding of AFMO.

Mr. Bell began studying birds around the age of 12, and kept records from that time on. He obtained his Bird Banding Master Permit in 1954. Over the years he had 15 sub-permittees, whom he mentored for their Bird Banding Permit. As of May 2013, Mr. Bell had banded 142,255 birds, and had 1,481 recoveries.

He was given the PA Game Commission Certificate of Appreciation in 2006, in recognition of over 50 years of unparalleled service. "Your exemplary achievement in bird banding, bird research and providing homes for wildlife is truly inspirational to everyone who has a love and appreciation for the natural world".

Mr. Bell was given the John and Norah Lane Award for "Outstanding Contribution to Bluebird Conservation by an Individual", from the North American Bluebird Society, in 1983 (at that time Bell had over 250 bluebird nest boxes in Greene County that he monitored, kept records, and banding the nestlings and some adults.

Ralph was awarded the US Department of Forest Service 2003 Volunteer Award of the Year for 46 years of outstanding dedication and service; the PA Society for Ornithology Earl Poole Award in 1998; the 2006 Purple Martin Preservation Alliance Award "For a Lifetime of Dedication to Purple Martin Conservation in Western PA; he was PA Envirothon Leader for many years; Ornithological leader for 46 years at the West Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls, WV; the Founder and leader of the Jefferson Audubon Christmas Bird Count, Clarksville, PA, December, 1958 for 50+ years; and contributed research to the 1st and 2nd *Atlas Of Breeding Birds In Pennsylvania*.

(continued on Page 3)

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Forty-five years ago I met Ralph Bell for the first time. It came about serendipitously. That summer, my family camped a few days at Dolly Sods. My husband Fred was birding around the campground when he met George Hurley who was doing the same thing. They struck up a conversation and George mentioned that bird banding occurred there in the fall. When we returned that fall, Ralph was banding. He was very friendly and somewhat under-staffed. So he put us to work and we've been working there every fall since. Ralph also contacted Carolyn Conrad and asked her to send us a BBC membership form which we promptly completed. I cannot overstate what a life changing event that was.

Ralph was very generous in teaching us about identifying birds in the hand so when he suggested we apply for a banding sub-permit under him, we jumped at the chance. Ralph's contributions to birding and his knowledge of birds are well-known. His effect on people's lives may not be as well known but I am sure many other people can characterize meeting Ralph as a life-changing event. I hope each of you had the opportunity to know him but, even if you didn't, you still benefit from his work as he had a profound influence on the activities of the Brooks Bird Club. The club has lost a giant and he is sorely missed.

– President Carol McCullough

REMEMBRANCES OF RALPH K. BELL

"It is a Great Day for the Race!" was often a greeting given to folks visiting the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory by Ralph Bell. After a puzzled look or response of "What race?," Ralph's come back was "The Human Race!" The human race is a better place because of Ralph Bell. His positive attitude of life and people set a tone of friendliness where ever he was.

I met Ralph in 1976 at a West Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage. I was not a birder at the time and I had just finished a semester as a graduate student at WVU. Since I was not accustomed to having any free time, my wife and I decided to return to Blackwater Falls where we had honeymooned to attend the Pilgrimage. We went to an early morning bird walk. The leaders were Ralph Bell, George Breiding, and Glenn Phillips. They shared birding by ear; I was hooked. Ralph was calling out all these bird names from the slightest chip notes. He then would proceed to teach the differences. He invited me to join Brooks Bird Club. I have been a member ever since.

That fall, Elizabeth Zimmerman invited me to go to Dolly Sods. I met Ralph for the second time. I had the whole morning to observe his banding skills identifying these confusing falls warblers. While his head was down studying the warbler in hand, he would be calling the names of fly overs. When a visitor like me would come, he would stop, make them welcome and proceed to share information about the bird in hand. As the years passed and I had spent more time at the banding station, Ralph invited me to net tend and later to be his sub-permittee bander. Ralph has been a positive influence on me. He loved a good joke and to share the laughter with those he encountered. He was full of compliments for those he encountered, but try to return a compliment and you would receive, "Cut the stuff." My life has been enriched through our friendship. "It is nice to know famous people," was uttered by Ralph. This chicken and sheep farmer is as famous as they come in my book.

– Lejay Graffious, Bruceton Mills, WV

One bright day in September, 1960, I first met Ralph Bell when he was mist netting and banding birds with George Hall at what was to become the Allegheny Front Migratory Observatory. He and George worked steadily and gently until all songbirds netted that morning were identified, banded and released.

Ralph Bell was an Appalachian naturalist and citizen scientist. Through his energy, his example, and his humility he contributed much to natural history and especially to ornithology. He shared his knowledge and experience gracefully and freely throughout his long life. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and his family. We celebrate his accomplishments. And when I remember Ralph Bell, I will always think of him active among his mist nets on a West Virginia mountain on that glorious, shining autumn day.

– Larry Schwab, Morgantown, WV

I am deeply saddened to hear of Ralph Bell's death. My memories of him date back to the early '80s when our Potomac Valley Audubon Society's early field trips included a trek to the banding station at Dolly Sods. Ralph was kindness itself to us! Quick to recognize us as 'newbies' (mostly) to this scene, he made us feel entirely welcome and patiently explained the process of mist-netting and banding. He was a gentle jokester and a great counterpoint to the curmudgeonly George Hall (who took some getting used to!)

Giants in any field of endeavor come along very seldom in this life and I feel privileged to have encountered one of them-- Ralph Bell-- along the way.

– Jean Neely, Near Shepherdstown, WV

Very sorry to hear about Ralph passing. I always looked forward to birding with him at BBC functions. I learned a lot from people like Ralph, Glen Phillips and George Hurley. I think Ralph got (my wife) Judy her first Black Vulture near Trout in Greenbrier County years ago. I always remember him saying, "It's a great day for the race". Someone would bite and ask what race. "The human race" Ralph would reply. I also remember a very moving talk he gave during wildflower pilgrimage. It was on Dolly Sods and he was talking about the banding station.

He will be missed.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

Am sorry to hear of Ralph's passing. He has been a long-time colleague of mine comparing notes about hummingbird, goldfinch, blue jay and monarch migration among other things. I enjoyed our many conversations over the years comparing each fall's flight, or discussing his banding results at the PSO meetings. My condolences to his friends and family.

– Laurie J. Goodrich, Ph.D.,

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association,
Orwigsburg, PA

My wife and I visited Ralph on one of his 3RBC events in May, and as we walked the road with him, listening for Cerulean Warblers, spotting a hummingbird on a nest, and seeing a Bald Eagle (a good day!), he told us about his hip surgery. As I recall, he underwent the surgery in his 80s, and they didn't want to do general anesthesia, so as the surgeon removed a piece of bone, Ralph said, "what are you going to do with that?" The surgeon explained it would be thrown away. Ralph asked if he could have the bone. "What do you want to do with it?" the doctor asked. "Give it to my dog," Ralph replied.

That's how I remember the tale, anyway. What a well-lived life, what a man dedicated to his land. He will be missed.

– Dave Liebmann, Columnist, On the Wing, Pittsburgh Quarterly magazine

Birds were Ralph's life. He had extraordinary birding skills that he used to further bird studies in many ways.

Those activities are well known. But what I admired about him was that he could bird with people of any ability and make them feel comfortable. He immediately was a friend and not just a teacher. I have several stories about Ralph but I'll relate only one. At my first foray several of us were driving down a shaded highway and a bird ran across the road. Ralph said "its a thrush but I don't know which one". The rest of us could plainly tell it was a robin. That was when I learned two things, Ralph was color blind and you can identify birds by how they act.

– Greg Eddy, Alexandria, VA

(continued from Page 1)

RALPH BELL PASSES

He lectured over 65 years on birds and nature to school children, civic groups, bird clubs, Boy Scouts, and many other organizations. He was interviewed on the radio in Pittsburgh, PA and elsewhere, as an expert on the subject of birds and nature.

Ralph published over 200 articles on birds and nature. From 1956 to 1975 he published articles in EBBA News for the Eastern Bird Banding Association, including the years 1964 to 1973, when he wrote a column titled "A Bird Bander's Diary". He published articles in THE REDSTART and THE MAILBAG for the Brooks Bird Club for many years. He wrote a column titled "Bluebirds" for the Nature Society News, Griggsville, IL, and published articles in many other publications.

In remembrance of Ralph K. Bell, please consider memorials to the Ralph K. Bell Bird Club, c/o Marjorie Howard-President, 149 Preachers Road, Waynesburg, PA 15370 or the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory, c/o Joan Bell Pattison-Project Leader, 10391 Glastonbury Circle #202, Fort Myers, FL 33913.



JOANN GRAHAM PASSES

JoAnn H. Graham, 80, of Industry, PA, passed away unexpectedly Monday, March 3, 2014. She was born on August 13, 1933. A resident of Industry for nearly 60 years, she was a member of Bridge-water Presbyterian Church. She was an avid bird watcher, and was a member of Brook's Bird Club, Wheeling, WV. Preceding her in death was her daughter, Sharon Graham, a son, Phillip W. Graham, and a brother, Tom Alcock. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Phillip Graham, a daughter, Debra, and seven grand- and great-grandchildren.

Editor's Note

I've been a BBC member since the end of 1995. What started my life-long affair with the club, after being recruited by Carl & Juanita Slater, was the 1995 Labor Day weekend, when I met up with the Slaters and the club in Canaan Valley and traveled up to the AFMO for a morning of banding. My heart thanks Ralph Bell and George Hall, and many others, for starting and maintaining the banding station.

My love of running Breeding Bird Surveys started in 1996 at the Tucker County Foray, running with Ralph and his sidekick, Ginnie Cronenberger. Thanks to his interest in me, both at Foray and on his farm, I help the McCulloughs with BBS routes at Foray now, and I run my own local route. The many times I spent in Ralph's company, I enjoyed.

2014 IMBD REPORTS

Yesterday was a beautiful day to be outside birding. The number of birders was small, but the number of bird species is huge, 108 for the day. That is just awesome. A Virginia Rail and 23 species of warblers were part of the tally

– Mindy Waldron, President, Bibbee Nature Club, additions by Jim Phillips, 5/4/14

John Hubbard, Beverly Delidow, Derrick Kolling, Wendell Argabrite and I conducted a Big Day in Cabell and Mason Counties yesterday. We started at 4 am and birded until about 8:30 pm. Our total count was 138 species, which is the best count our group has had for this route. We started at Green Bottom WMA trying to call rails (no luck), but did get Killdeer and Eastern Screech-owl. We worked our way toward McClintic WMA just as the sun was coming up. After we birded McClintic, we worked our way down Rt. 2 to Green Bottom WMA again with stops at Gallipolis Ferry, Shady Waters Campground, Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam and Ashton wetlands. We ended the day at Beech Fork Campground to the calling of a Barred Owl. Notable missing species were Peregrine Falcon, Bald Eagle, White-winged Scoter and Ruby-Throated Hummingbird (all of which had been seen in the last few days). We also didn't find any rails or terns, which was a disappointment. However, we did find a Swainson's Warbler at McClintic WMA and did very well on shorebirds. We ended the day with 27 warbler and four vireo species.

– Gary Rankin, Lavalette, WV, 5/8/14

The birding walks at Migration Day were a challenge with repeated rain showers coming through. About a dozen enthusiastic and intrepid walkers came along with the rain and wind, and were easier to find than the birds this year. Thanks to Ron and Wendy and all the volunteers for putting on a great day. We had 22 total species.

– Bev Delidow, birding Little Beaver State Park, Raleigh Co., WV, 5/13/14

We conducted our Tucker County bird count on International Migratory Bird Day. Our diligent observers found 110 species, which beat last year's count by 1. Our individual numbers are not yet complete, but here are the highlights: Common Merganser (5); Ruffed Grouse (4); Alder Flycatcher (1); Northern Waterthrush (4); Golden-winged Warbler (1); Kentucky Warbler (1); Canada Warbler (13); Vesper Sparrow (1); Swamp Sparrow (11); Bobolink (53).

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV, 5/15/14

Mike Griffith, Matt Orsie, Gary Rankin and I did a 2014 WV Big Day on May 17th. We were delighted that we were able to establish a new WV Big Day record with 148 species recorded. We drove 398 miles and birded from 4 am to about 11 pm, covering Cabell, Mason, Nicholas and Pocahontas County. It was mainly overcast with occasional showers and temperatures ranged from 41 to 60 degrees. We saw a Swainson's Warbler at McClintic, Red-necked Phalarope, Stilt and White-rumped Sandpipers at RCB Locks, a late Lesser Scaup at Gallipolis Ferry, a late Gadwall at Greenbottom WMA and Sora and Virginia Rails at Muddlety. We missed Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler again, Common Nighthawk, Summer Tanager, Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

BBCERS AT KILLDEER PLAINS – FEB. 12-13

Killdeer Plains is in the flat, country of northern Ohio. Large, open fallow fields interspersed with wood lots, windbreaks of trees, and low, marshy areas. There are quite a lot of ponds, but that was not evident today as all is covered deep under snow. We found no open water.

On our way there, we planned to stop at a Mr. Jordan's farm, near Ashley (about 10 miles from Delaware OH), to see a large flock of snow buntings. Janice said Scott had gotten good directions off the internet, and we drove right to the place. The rest of our group, the Eskers, the Hiltons, and Jon Benedetti from Parkersburg and the McCulloughs from Pittsburgh were already there when we arrived. They had set up spotting scopes,



*Snow Buntings feeding at Jordan's Farm
Photo by Rosie Campbell*

but we scarcely needed them! The thousands of snow buntings were right in front of us, very close. (It was estimated between 3,500 and 5000, but I thought there might be even more!) We pulled in and parked, then feasted our eyes on this amazing spectacle. Wow! The man who was feeding the birds, Mr. Jordan, was a very friendly, hospitable person who was glad to share the birds with us all. He said he'd been feeding the birds for about twenty years, but had never had so many up close before. They mostly stay more in the open fields. He figures the extra harsh weather has concentrated them at his feeding area more than usual. (He was feeding finely ground corn, some of it almost powdered, with a bit of nyjer seed mixed in.)

Mixed with them were a good many horned larks and a Lapland Longspur or two, other birds I don't get to see very often. I took dozens of photos, in the trees, on the ground, in the drive way, in the garden and back yard, flying around and out in the fields. With the scopes, we could see them doing a playful thing; digging themselves down in the snow almost out of sight. Some dug their own holes, others ousted a bird from a hole it had dug. They seemed to be snow-bathing, like chickens powdering themselves in dust. It looked like fun, but is probably a survival skill for them if they are to get by in the really cold and blizzard conditions where they may be found.

Mr. Jordan invited us in his house to see his stove, (and warm up too!) He had a corn pellet stove. We could stand by the stove and look out the window at the buntings just a few feet away! It was such a marvelous spectacle, we stayed a good while and still could hardly tear ourselves away. It was a lifetime experience to see so many of these pretty birds at once and actually be among them!

We stopped in Mansfield for lunch, then drove right to the Plains. Driving along we saw little flocks of horned larks, snow buntings and a few sparrows feeding at the road's edge. There is snow everywhere and the berm of the road is the only exposed ground they can reach. There were a good many hawks seen: red-tailed, rough-legged, kestrels and some magnificent fly-bys of northern harriers.

Our first stop at Killdeer Plains was an owl wintering area. The ones of our group who had been here before had sometimes found saw whet and long-eared owls here. Today, we saw no owls, nor any pellets. The only sign of an owl here was one snow print of a bird swooping for a prey. At our next stop there were several red-headed woodpeckers, drumming and flying back and forth from a woods to a tree line along the road. We thought they were feeding on acorns. Driving on, we saw several bald eagles, more hawks, some deer, and four short-eared owls, perched on the tops of dead trees a good piece away.

In later afternoon, we came to another area where it was hoped we could find the saw whets, or long-eared owls. After a look at the distance, the depth of snow, and the

time; the consensus of opinion was to go on to supper. After an excellent supper at Mugsy's Place, we checked into the Comfort Inn in Upper Sandusky. Some of us intended to watch more of the Olympics, but dozed off in our warm beds before we saw much.

Thurs. Feb. 13

After a nice breakfast at our hotel, we donned several layers of clothes and drove back to Killdeer Plains and the owl area. It was about 4 degrees with hoar frost on the trees and shrubs, like a scene from Dr Zhivago. The owl area looked as daunting as it had last evening, only colder! We bravely crossed a slushy ditch and set off across a long, fallow field towards the mixed conifer and hardwood grove where we hoped to find the owls. There were a myriad of deer tracks and beds, little critter trails on the snow and evidence of grassland birds feeding on the agrimony and other weed seeds. (Note here: Get someone short and stocky to break trail. Dick Esker is too long legged.)

We arrived out of breath and sweating, but with nearly frozen toes, at the (alleged) owl woods. An immature bald eagle flew towards us, but veered off, out of sight. Some of us circled the area while others combed through the middle. After a hard trudge and some sharp looking, we determined no owls were here, nor had been since it snowed.

Back at the cars, we warmed our toes, then went on to look for a snowy owl that had been heard of near Kidron. We had planned to stay at Killdeer Plains for two days, but having seen most of our target birds and proved to ourselves we weren't going to find the saw whets and



*Snowy Owl in Kidron
Photo by Rosie*

long eareds, we only stayed one. We had lunch in Mansfield then drove straight to where the snowy owl was. Unlike the other elusive owls we had looked for, the snowy owl was perched on top of a pole,

right near the road. We parked and all had good looks and some photos of the snowy owl before it flew to a nearby rooftop. We could still see the owl well, but not as closely. Everyone was thrilled to see this magnificent bird.

The group separated here, going back to their different homes. The Parkersburg folks were going to check out another snowy owl, listed not too far from here. Janice and I went to the Wilderness Center in Wilmot. We looked at all the nature displays and especially the feeder observation set-up. The feeders were attracting all the common birds we had already seen plus a chipmunk, a red squirrel and a fox squirrel who was the King of the Feeder. Here we added a fox sparrow, and grackle to our lists. We drove on home, stopping once for coffee and sweets. We reached home before dark, having just had a really wonderful birding experience.

– Submitted by Rosie Campbell

MAGEE MARSH – MAY 8-11, 2014

It was another glorious weekend of birding for George, Susie and me at “the warbler capital of the world” in May at the famous Magee Marsh, on Lake Erie 30 miles east of Toledo. It adjoins the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.

We got to Port Clinton about 6, met Susie and headed for the Marsh, for an hour or so of birding before sunset. Good timing. The birds were active and we got about 8 warblers right off - Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, many Yellow-rumped, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Prothonotary, Parula, Blackburnian and Magnolia.

Susie and I were leaning on the boardwalk when the woman beside us said “Has anybody got an ovenbird?” And there, just below our feet, was a small, possibly juvenile, ovenbird, with the striped crown, walking around in the grass. We could almost touch the bird. That’s the great thing about the boardwalk in this seven acre patch of woods - the birds aren’t shy, they land in trees

a few feet above your head and you get a good look at them even without binocs.

Friday morning the parking lot kept us for awhile - Blackpoll, Tennessee, all the ones from yesterday, many Tree Swallows cruising overhead, and a Bald Eagle’s nest, roped off to keep cars and people at a safe distance. There was an adult sitting on the nest.

Friday afternoon we went to Metzger Marsh, where the greatly missed Pat Temple first took us. Abundant warblers again, especially a Cape May, about 20 feet away low in a tree, flitting about feeding and putting on a great show for about 20 minutes. Nearby were Nashville, Palm and more Yellow-rumped and I got my best look ever at a Tennessee. Then on to Maumee State Park, another favorite spot of Pat’s, for the Caspian Terns she first got for us. There they were, four of them sitting on the beach near the water, bigger than gulls and with black caps and orange bills.

Saturday morning we stopped first at the Benton-Carroll area, just off the highway before the entrance to the Marsh. It’s a marshy field and there were plenty of shore birds - a Red Knot (a life bird for all of us), Pectoral, Least and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, Killdeer, Semi-palmated Plover, both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. The Marsh was bustling again, several yellows and the ones we got earlier, but you never get tired of looking at that variety of colors, especially the male Blackburnian with that brilliant orange throat. Ditto Metzger in the afternoon, plus we stopped at a pulloff area, where others had spotted a Sora (rail). Susie and I got a good look at it feeding among the reeds. Rails are elusive birds and a rare sighting for us.

Sunday morning we stopped again at Benton-Carroll. Same good species and numbers as yesterday, plus flocks of Dunlins, probably a couple hundred, and a Savannah Sparrow. Then a final two hours in the Marsh before we headed home. Somebody spotted a Mourning Warbler, another hard to see bird who stays close to the ground. I didn’t see it but George, several feet away in the crowd, got a look.

It was a completely enjoyable and satisfying weekend, as it has been the past several years we’ve been here. George got 101 species, including 25 warblers. His Worm-eating, Mourning and Connecticut were three more than I got and two more than Susie got, but she got a Kentucky, which George and I didn’t. She got 90 species altogether. I got 86 species and 22 warblers.

“It’s easy to see why so many people are attracted to bird-watching. What other activity can be enjoyed by people from all walks of life, both fit and disabled, of any age, either alone or in groups, all the year round, any time of day, in all weathers, in all habitats, in town and country, in often beautiful or inspirational surroundings, at negligible cost?”

(“The Countryman” English Magazine)

– Submitted by Bob Rine

ELIZABETH MEANS- DUCKETT PASSES

Leah Elizabeth (Betty) Rohr died on May 13, 2014, at the age of 92. She was born in Baltimore MD, on June 5, 1921, to Dr. Charles Bascom Rohr and Leah May Lindsay, a registered nurse. Her parents moved from Hagerstown MD to Alum Bridge West Virginia in 1923, where her father opened an office adjoining their home and practiced medicine in WV until he was nearly 87 years old. She attended Glenville State College WV, then Wesleyan College in Buckhannon WV, graduating with a high school teaching degree in Biology. Later she obtained a Masters Degree in Biology in Huntington WV. She studied the cello and enjoyed playing her antique instrument, as well as piano and organ. She married William Conrad (Con) Means from Camden WV in 1943, who served in WW2. After the war, daughters Leannore (Lea) Elizabeth and Gertrude Ruth (Trudy) were born and son William Conrad, Jr. (Rad).

She was a tireless bird watcher and member of The Brooks Bird Club.

– from www.patboylefuneralhome.com

SPRING BREAK IN NEW YORK CITY

Judy and I spent her 2014 Spring Break in New York City. We rode the Amtrak train from Hinton, WV to New York. Along the way, we kept a list of the birds we could identify from the train. In New York City, we used the trails in Central Park as much as we could to get to various museums and restaurants. An added bonus to the trip was a display of some of John James Audubon's watercolors.

The bird list from the train consisted mostly of larger birds easily recognized from a fast moving conveyance. Canada goose, bald eagle, osprey, great black-backed gull and yellow-crowned night-heron were noted. The train did slow in heavier populated areas and made several stops so that smaller birds such as northern mockingbird, northern cardinal and red-winged blackbirds were added to the tally of two dozen species.



Central Park Bloodroot
Photo by Jim Phillips

While in New York, we stayed with my sister-in-law. She lives across the street from the northern end of Central Park. We walked 4-7 miles a day through the park to various attractions. The park has many trails that traverse a variety of habitats including wooded streams, meadows, a lake and some small ponds. The northern shovellers and ruddy ducks were especially nice and easy to view. White-throated sparrows were a very common sight, and it was in-

teresting to note a hermit thrush scratching around in the leaf litter behind a park bench with hundreds of people going by without seeing it. Our visit occurred the week before Easter, so we were early for warblers and only found Louisiana Waterthrush, Blue-winged and Yellow-throated Warblers. Skunk cabbage and bloodroot were in full bloom and bluebells were coming along.

The New York Historical Society Museum has over 400 of Audubon's original watercolors in their collection, and they had an exhibit of some of them while we were in town. They were great to see. Each one had a corresponding number so that you could use an ipod and hear the voice of the bird. We had forgotten that the Bachman's Warbler had been recorded. After the museum we googled Audubon and discovered that he is buried in Manhattan. The grave is topped with a 20' cross. Etched on one side are Audubon images of some of the birds and on the other side some of his mammals are featured. Featured on the base was a paint brush and palette on one side and a rifle and powder horn on the other.

If planning a trip to that area, be sure to check out New York Audubon at <http://www.nycaudubon.org/go-birding>

– Submitted by Jim Phillips



*Judy & Jim at
Audubon's grave*
Photo by Jim Phillips



DEAN MEMORIAL BIRDATHON RESULTS

I want to congratulate those who counted birds during the 2014 Ruth Ann Dean Memorial Birdathon. This year, we counted a total of 144 species, including 27 warbler species.

Sorry about the nice weather. I know everyone prefers to bird in pouring rain and thunderstorms. I remember huddling in the middle of Altona Marsh last year under my raincoat waiting for an incredible downpour to pass. And we call it fun!

This year's winner of the birdathon is the White-eyed Weary-o's. Joette "Birdmom" Borzik and Chuck Parker birded for 18 hours and got 121 species.

We also award Honorable Mention to any team with over 100 species. The honor this year goes to the Tufted Turkeys - Bob Dean and Stan Corwin-Roach for 113 species.

The winner of the Big Sit this year was Deb Hale and Mike Wiltshire who got 55 species at Murphy's Farm, Harper's Ferry National Battlefield Park.

Congratulations to all and especially to Joette, Chuck, Deb and Mike.

– Sandy Sagalkin, Birdathon Coordinator, 5/9/14

BBC/3RBC 2014 OUTING

On April 26th, we had eleven birders (not counting the sick Ed. & wife who stopped by to get things started) for the Raccoon Creek State Park outing in Pennsylvania. There were two BBC members, three 3-Rivers Bird Club members and six others who heard about it. 43 species were heard or observed, including a Red-shouldered Hawk, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireos, Ruby-crowned Kinglets and 8 species of warblers, including Palm.

The food was good. Everybody brought something, even those who were not club members. The weather was great and everybody seemed to have a good time. All nice folks.

This outing will hopefully occur again next year, and hopefully, Ed. won't have the flu!

2014 EARLY SPRING MEETING REPORT

The Late Winter Rendezvous and membership meeting picked a fine weekend to meet at North Bend SP. Dick Esker organized a top notch birding extravaganza! Friday night an eBird evangelist, yours truly, gave a short tutorial on data entry, showed a few examples of flagged species' write-ups that were accepted, and demonstrated what can be done with your data once it is entered. All this was in an effort to convert the wayward. The go to saying for the night was Larry Helgerman's refrain when told about an unusual bird sighting- Are you sure! The night ended with owl calling from the parking lot where a barred owl was added to the WVBBA2.



*Everyone preparing to be 'wowed' by ducks
Photo by Ryan Tomazin*

The morning began early for the board as they met and discussed the business of the Club. The most important decision made was to supplement the cost of the Foray and the Fall Reunion to help bring down the fees in an effort to increase participation. After breakfast, a seven car caravan toting near 30 excited birders headed for Little Hocking, Ohio, hoping for a chance to see WV's second Harlequin Duck, located on the Ohio River in this area. The birding

morning began with my ID of a raven at 60 mph and Dick Esker's question, "Are you sure?" That refrain was heard many times this day: a second Harlequin, Greater vs. Lesser Scaup, Red-necked Grebe, and long distance sightings of almost every water bird imaginable. In the end everyone got excellent looks at the celebrity Harlequin swimming with, at least for this year, ho-hum White-winged Scoters. Only a few saw the second one which ended up along the far bank after a barge came through.

We had a relaxing lunch further north along the river, where for dessert we were treated with eye candy in the form of a male Long-tailed Duck. The day ended in North Bend where some of the group birded on until Red-headed Woodpeckers were located. In the end, 22 waterfowl, three grebes and a coot brought the total up to a remarkable 26 water birds. A total of 74 species were found for the day (plus three owls that night).



*Beautiful male Long-tailed Duck at lunch
Photo by Jim Triplett*

After a fine meal, two groups went out to survey owls for WVBBA2, adding one Great-horned Owl, two Barred Owls and four Eastern Screech-owls in the four blocks surveyed. Most of the group stayed for the key note by Jim Sheehan, PhD. candidate at WVU, on the effects of pipelines on forest birds.

After breakfast, Carol McCullough led an efficient and productive membership meeting where we discussed electronic Redstarts, website changes, future meetings and other essential business. A good time was had by all. Are you sure? Yes, I am sure.

– Submitted by Scott Pendleton



Harlequin Duck second from left with White-winged Scoters – Photo by Ryan Tomazin

CORRESPONDENCES

Researchers for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority found over 200 dead crows near greater Boston recently, and there was concern that they may have died from Avian Flu. A bird pathologist examined the remains of all the crows, and, to everyone's relief, confirmed the problem was definitely NOT Avian Flu. The cause of death appeared to be vehicular impacts.

However, during the detailed analysis it was noted that varying colors of paints appeared on the bird's beaks and claws. By analyzing these paint residues it was determined that 98% of the crows had been killed by impact with trucks, while only 2% were killed by an impact with a car.

MTA then hired an ornithological behaviorist to determine if there was a cause for the disproportionate percentages of truck kills versus car kills. The ornithological behaviorist very quickly concluded the cause: when crows eat road kill, they always have a look-out crow in a nearby tree to warn of impending danger. They discovered that while all the lookout crows could shout "Cah", not a single one could shout "Truck."

– forwarded by Juanita Slater

I have not birded for several months because my wife, at the end of October, broke her left arm. She's okay now, and I take her to rehab therapy several times a week.

Lake Texoma (OK and TX border) is where the Hagerman Refuge is located. Power pool level is 617 feet, but now, because of drought, is down to 608 feet. Still lots of water, but shorelines are way out. I have seen the lake at 605 feet.

Enjoyed the recent Mail Bag. The Snowy Owls were good.

– Karl "Mike" Haller, Sherman, TX



INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

Having read an earlier posting this morning about the Red-necked Grebes, I finally was able to get down to the river for about an hour between appointments. Taking a ride on Rissler Road, I did not find much on the river except Canada Geese and a few Mallards and some Common Mergansers, although, I did get to see a Bald Eagle flying down river toward the bridge.

However, I hit a bonanza on Bloomery Road between the bridge and the "s" curve. Between the bridge and Moulton Park, while beginning to count some of the many Common Mergansers on the river, I found two male Long-tailed Ducks diving throwing their long tails up in the air as they went under. Then they stayed up for awhile and joined the mergansers giving me great looks at them with my binoculars. Beautiful indeed.

Closer to Moulton, I finally found the two Red-necked Grebes (FOY) both close to the shore, again giving me good views. There was also a Horned Grebe nearby, as well as a few more Common Mergansers. Further up river between Moulton and the "s" curve, I found a Common Loon (FOY) resting about mid-river and a Pied-billed Grebe closer to the far bank. There also were 40 plus Bufflehead and a bunch more Common Mergansers a little beyond the loon. Some Hooded Mergansers were also seen up and down the river.

– Carol Del-Colle, Summit Point, WV, 2/15/14



Harris's Sparrow – Photo by Matt Orsie

It was a light snowy morning that turned into a bonanza in Jefferson County for Chuck and I. I will highlight our best at different locations. Shenandoah River, John Rissler Road - 2 Winter Wrens, 2 Red-necked Grebes, 3 American Wigeon, 2 Bald Eagles, Yellow-rumps, GC Kinglets; Shenandoah River, Bloomery Road - 9 Lesser and 1 Greater Scaup, 2 Horned Grebes, 1 Red-throated Loon, Ring-billed Gull, 4 American Wigeon, one additional Red-necked Grebe not seen on Rissler Road, 2 Red-breasted Mergansers; Harpers Ferry Campground (MD waters as seen from WV, reported in MD) - 32 Common Goldeneye, 2 male Canvasbacks; Campground Road toward Murphy Farm that was snowed in - Hermit Thrush, Sharp-shinned Hawk; Country Club Ponds - 24 Redheads, 25 Gadwall, 5 Lesser Scaup, 2 American Wigeon, 2 American Black Duck; Cattail Run Road - Northern Harrier, 3 American Tree Sparrows, 5 Horned Larks; Wetland near ruins off Kabletown Road - 2 Northern Pintail, 2 American Pipits, 1 Killdeer, 20 Rusty Blackbirds, 3 Common Grackle; Old Cave Road - 12 American Pipits.

When I came home, my husband had just found a red morph Eastern Screech-owl in one of the nest boxes. It was the same location we had 3 owlets born two years ago. Maybe this was a boomerang kid?

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 2/15/14

Saw four eagles (immature and adult golden and immature and adult bald) flying over mountain pasture land at Onego west of Seneca Rocks today, plus two Red-headed Woodpeckers working old oak trees.

– Rodney Bartgis, Valley Bend, WV, 2/22/14

I have a large flock of blackbirds gregariously occupying all feeders and snowy ground below them. I've been looking for Rusties all morning, and finally have 4 at the feeders now. When we were shoveling our 5 inches of powder snow we received (on top of ice) this morning, we were entertained by "Conk-a-ree" sung numerous times from the RWBL's. Two Common Grackles were present earlier, plus 20+ pesky Brown-headed Cowbirds and a few starlings. Rusty Blackbird - 4 (1 male in breeding plumage, 2 females breeding plumage, 1 female non-breeding plumage); Red-winged Blackbird - 20+ (mostly males with a few females).

The Eastern Screech-owl pair continues to occupy their nest box together. This morning, the first owl returned to the box at 6:13 AM and 6:30 AM for the second owl. Last night was so comical to watch the two owls before they left the nest box for their evening hunt in the rain. One would nudge the other out of the nest hole so each got nearly equal time perched in the hole looking out before they flew out. They switched places 3 or 4 times, and there was a second or two where two squished reddish faces were in the nest hole simultaneously. What a heart melter!

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 3/3/14

About 10 minutes ago I went out to get the mail. I heard a Red-shouldered Hawk screaming in the trees across the road and soon spotted it. Then another started up in the same area. Then behind me behind my neighbor's house I heard a third. Then a fourth. Finally all 4 were flying around and screaming constantly. Just circling--no attempt to make contact with each other. After a few minutes they quieted down and moved off. Perhaps the local nesting pair from White Park and their offspring. Maybe 2 pairs now?

– Terry Bronson, Morgantown, WV, 3/10/14



Golden Eagle
Photo by N. Wade Snyder

This morning on my way to Franklin at the top of the Allegheny, I spotted a number of large birds soaring. I pulled off the road and was treated to a jostling match between an adult

SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE (con.)

Bald Eagle and a juvenile Golden Eagle. They continued harassing each other as they headed north. There as another eagle in the distance but I couldn't identify it. The eagles had the Common Ravens aloft talking to each other. While I watched the above show, a flock of 10 - 15 Killdeer flew over. It was a great start to the day on a beautiful, warmish morning.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 3/11/14

I had an entertaining evening watching a Greater Yellowlegs catch and finally swallow one of the newly Spring awakened frogs from a pond located at Bardane, Jefferson County. Also nearby, a White-crowned Sparrow was enjoying an evening bath from a small puddle of water.

– N. Wade Snyder, Shenandoah Junction, WV, 4/4/14



Greater Yellowlegs and dinner
Photo by N. Wade Snyder

Saturday, when you see your FOY Wood Thrush and a perched Bald Eagle in the trees above the parking lot you almost knew the walk was going to be a good one. Good omens indeed, as it turned out to be a great day. The Potomac Valley Audubon Society had 9 warblers, 4 vireos, Orchard Orioles and several shore birds for the 13 birders on the trip. The weather was mild and sunny, and because of the quantity of the warblers seen we had to cut the hike distance a little short to finish on time, however no one complained. Yellow-rumped Warblers were everywhere, eating and singing. A conservative estimate was 50 seen all along the walk which made it the 'bird of the day'. There were 59 species seen or heard by most through our walk including two Red-necked Grebes.

– Jim Farley, Jefferson County, WV, 4/28/14

Yesterday afternoon, there were 100's of Chimney Swifts and swallows over New River in the Hinton area (Bluestone Dam to Madams Creek). The swallows were mostly Tree Swallows and Purple Martins (first of the season for me). There were also some Cliff (first of the season for me), Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows in the gang.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 4/30/14

SOUTHERN WV EAGLE SURVEY RESULTS

Here are the results from our 7th spring eagle survey:

7 of 11 sites reported eagles.

Temps were 35-65 degrees, cloud cover was 2-80%, wind was 0-10 mph.

There were 33 participants.

We had two sites on the Greenbrier River, one on Indian Creek and 8 on New River.

Bald eagles - 7 adults, 10 1st year, 10 2nd year & 2 3rd year = 29

Golden eagles - 5 adults, 1 immature = 6

Total= 35

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 3/12/14

MORE EAGLE PROBLEMS IN SUMMERS CO.

The Brooks Bald Eagle pair (known to some as Whitey and Streaky) have had an exciting several days. On Friday March 7th, Streaky (the female) was hit by a train right across from the Island nest. We were able to catch up with a person that was on the train at the time who was able to take Ron to the exact spot. Despite it only being a little over 1.5 hours from the impact, no eagle was found. Saturday we were watching the area, hoping to see both eagles, when we got the call that another train engineer had just seen an eagle on the ground in that same location. Ron (Perrone) and volunteer Sam Richmond hurried to the scene. She was hiding in

a pile of logs, but when she saw Ron and Sam she flew with labored flight over to the Island and sat in a tree. It was VERY easy to see that she felt terrible. By the end of the day she had moved over to the old nest site on the Island and she spent the next couple of days there. By Monday evening she felt well enough to move over to the hillside across from Brooks near the new nest site. By Tuesday she was feeling well enough to take real flights. Whitey, the male, stayed either on the hillside nest or with her the entire time. They are definitely devoted to each other. As of March 13, both birds are still together but seem to have quit any sort of nesting/brooding at all.

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(Streaky was eventually caught and brought to the Three Rivers Avian Center to be tended to.) I sadly write to let you know that Streaky is dead. Her liver shut down fully over the last several days and she has been completely unable to eat or drink. Any food we were able to get her to swallow reappeared in the cage in a matter of minutes. We were giving her fluids under her skin but we couldn't keep ahead of the jaundice. In the meantime she was having periodic seizures as her body began the "shutting down" process. Sometimes the seizures would last for over 1/2 an hour. We never could get her legs to do more than spasm-move. Since liver failure is agonizing to go through, and since she was at the final stages, Dr Streit authorized the decision this morning to euthanize her. We use the same barbiturate that veterinarians use, so her end was sleep and peaceful.

There are many who have been praying, hoping, willing her to live and return to her normal life. Thank you all, your support has been tremendous. We wish we had better news. Thank you to all who made donations to help with her care - it made a huge difference and allowed us to focus on the nursing and veterinary aspect of her stay.

Here's to Streaky - she had a lot of determination and was an incredible individual to get to know. Fly well in blue skies winged one.

– Wendy Perrone
TRAC Executive Director

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Mack Frantz
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CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

July 12, 2014 – 9:00- 12:00 PM. Blueberry Hill for berries and birds. We enjoy this trip to pick berries, bird and spend time with friends. Blueberry Hill near Flat Top, WV. Contact Mindy Waldron for all three events listed.

August 23, 2014 – 8:30- whenever you need to leave. Plan to share lunch with us. Crumps Bottom/Bull Falls Annual trip for birds, wildflowers, butterflies, and anything else. Meet at the Pipestem St. Park tower to drive down to the area.

September 13, 2014 – 9:00 AM (all day). Burke's Garden in Tazewell Co. Virginia for birds. Start at East River Mtn. We'll meet at the East River Mtn. park at the top of the mountain, check it for hawks, then travel to Burke's Garden.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

June 22, 2014 – Picnic at Scott and Janice Emrick's, Jerusalem, OH.. Guests are welcome at 2 pm; potluck supper at 5 pm (there will be time to bird and explore before and after supper).

July 19, 2014 – Picnic at Bill Beatty/Jan Runyan's, Wellsburg, WV. Guests are welcome at noon to swim or cool off by/in the pool; nature walk around 2 pm; potluck supper at 5 pm (there will be time to bird and explore before and after supper).

Aug 16, 2014 – Picnic at Rosie and Malv Campbell's, Bethesda, OH. Guests are welcome at 2 pm; potluck supper at 5 pm (there will be time to bird and explore before and after supper).

Sept 13, 2014 – Picnic at Bill Mead's, Bethesda, OH. Guests are welcome at 2 pm; potluck supper at 5 pm (there will be time to bird and explore before and after supper).

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

June Coordinator: *Jon Benedetti*
(304-295-8945)

June 18-20, 2014 – New River Gorge/ Cranberry Glade. Call Coordinator for details.

August Coordinator: *Dick Esker*
(304-863-8765)

August 7, 2014 – Destinations for this month will be determined week by week based. Call the Coordinator for details.

September Coordinator: *Jeanie Hilton*
(304-428-8641)

September 4, 2014 – Clear Creek Metro Park, 7:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7; bring lunch.

September 6, 2014 – SATURDAY - Annual Picnic, 5:00pm. McDonough Log Cabin "A", bring covered dish, drink and service.

September 13, 2014 – SATURDAY - Mountwood Park, 8:00am. Kroger's on 7th Street or 8:15am at beach area (near torpedos); bring lunch.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

June 21, 2014 – The Potomac Valley Audubon Society is sponsoring a birding trip to the National Conservation Training Center outside Shepherdstown on Saturday, from 7:30-11:00 a.m.

The trip is free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, but space will be limited and registration is required. Children will be welcome.

For more information or any questions you may have, please contact trip leader Sandy Sagalkin at monsansagalkin@myactv.net or 240-291-6465.

CANAAN VALLEY NWR

June 21, 2014 – Summer Solstice Bird walk. Meet at 7 am at the Refuge Visitor Center. It's high summer and the Refuge is simply alive with the sound of birds. Which favorites will we hear from today?

Don't miss this walk with ornithologist Casey Rucker. Bring binoculars--or borrow ours--and come along on this walk.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

For more information on these events and more, go to: http://www.wvstateparks.com/Hikes_Walks.html

2014 BONUS BIRDING WEEKEND REGISTRATION

Terra Alta, WV
July 25-26-27, 2014

“Lets go down to good ole T.A. and wrestle up a snake or salamander.....” and so the lyrics go referring to Oglebay Institute’s Terra Alta Mountain Camp in Preston County, West Virginia. This area is such a treasure for the enthusiastic naturalist, take Cranesville Swamp for instances: bird watchers may hear or see an Alder Flycatcher, Swamp Sparrow or Hermit Thrush while the botanists may be identifying several orchids, flowering Sundews, sedges and ferns. If hiking or bicycling is in your future, there are many off roads and trails to explore close to camp. Since Greg Park has retired from Oglebay Institute, our new camp host for OI will be Martin Tingley, no stranger to the BBC Foray. We want to make sure we give Martin our big “BBC Wave” when we see him.

Although camp facilities are a little rustic, we have the important things like a fully equipped kitchen, dining and living area, bath house with hot showers and flush toilets! Tents are available which are large enough to stand inside and cots will be provided for those who do not have tents or campers of their own. There is ample space to pick your spot if you do camp independently, but electrical hook-ups are not available.

This will be a very affordable weekend. Volunteers for some light meal prep, table setup, dish detail and general tidying up will be appreciated. Camp will officially open at 7:00 p.m. on Friday evening. **Make sure you stop for dinner before arriving.** Except for snack Friday night, the first scheduled meal will be Saturday morning breakfast. We will pack our lunch for the all day trip on Sat. and have dinner at camp. Sun. breakfast and lunch are included before we breakup camp.

***TOTAL COST \$45.00. Deadline for reservations is July 16.**

Make check payable to: Juanita Slater and send to 57290 Mehlman Road, Bellaire, Ohio 43906
along with reservation form.

(Must be a member of the Brooks Bird Club to attend.)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE/EMAIL _____

Please list all names attending _____

NEED TENT & COT? _____ YES _____ NO

NO. ATTENDING _____ @ \$45.00 EACH TOTAL \$ _____

*Scholarships available: www.brooksbirdclub.org for scholarship form to include with application



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A different kind of red-neck
In addition to scads of White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks, Red-necked Grebes were here in record numbers this past winter.

(Photo by Fred Atwood)

WHAT'S INSIDE

Ralph Bell Passes	1
Message From Our President.....	1
Remembrances of Ralph Bell.....	2
JoAnn Graham Passes	3
Editor's Note	3
IMBD WV Results	3
BBCers at Killdeer Plains.....	4
Magee Marsh Trip with Bob Rine.....	5
Elizabeth Means Duckett Passes	5
Spring Break in New York City with Jim & Judy Phillips	6
Ruth Ann Dean Birdathon Results.....	6
Early Spring Meeting Report	7
Correspondence	7
Interesting Sightings From Around The State.....	8-9
Southern WV Eagle Highlights.....	9
Changes In Contact Information.....	10
Chapter Happenings	10
Nature Happenings Around The State	10
2014 Bonus Birding Weekend Registration.....	11