



# THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA  
P.O. BOX 4077 • WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

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OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2015 RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

## Editor's Note

It is a time of transitions now. Fall is leading towards winter; the Eastern Shore trip has recently wrapped up, and we all are preparing for Christmas (Bird Counts); and the BBC Presidency will pass from Carol McCullough to Jay Buckelew. Carol has done a terrific job, following the examples laid before her by previous presidents, and Jay has already worked hard for the last handful of years, including two as President-Elect. Kudos to both of them, as they are great leaders for our Club!



That said, we continue to progress in the direction of many clubs and organizations around the country, in that we age without the benefit of many new younger members. It is a different world than when our BBC forefathers and mothers labored to build a group of hundreds of members with many dozens of families participating in outings, weekends, forays and more. In this day and age, to succeed, one needs to bridge the gulf between the outdoor world and the digital world, the joys of the wilderness and the increased requirements placed upon us by an ever-busier life. That said, there are still people out there, old and young, who can and should join us and participate in our outdoor (and indoor) activities. Whether bringing someone along for a CBC route or recruiting a student to come to Foray on scholarship, use your creativity and local relationships to help us continue to grow into the future.



*Gannets were unusually close on the Lewes Ferry  
– photo by Neal Hohman*

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is my last letter to the membership as President of the BBC. It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve and I am pleased to 'pass the gavel' to the next President of the club, Jay Buckelew. Jay has been very supportive of me during my term as have other leaders and members of the club. I appreciate this very much as it has made the time enjoyable. I have been on the Board of Trustees or an officer of the club for almost 20 years but this is a short time compared to many in our leadership. There are people who have served the club in various capacities for many decades and we would not be able to continue without such dedicated people. The BBC has a rich history and is well-known for the quality of our publications and our annual Foray as well as other activities. Members of our club had major responsibilities in both Breeding Bird Atlases, have served on the WV Bird Records Committee, etc. There is more the club can do, however, with involvement of more members so I urge you to keep abreast of club activities and join in the fun. Reading *The Mailbag* is a great way to keep up with what is happening. Another way is to periodically look at our website, <http://brooksbirdclub.org/>. I wish all of you a most Happy Holiday and a healthy fun-filled New Year. May many good bird sightings come your way.



– Carol McCullough, BBC President

## 2016 TUCKER COUNTRY FORAY ANNOUNCED

One of the favorite Foray locations is on the slate for 2016: Camp Kidd in Tucker County. We will be there June 13-21, and in an interesting wrinkle, the long weekend is towards the end of the Foray, rather than at the beginning.

For the uninitiated, Camp Kidd is a beautiful location just 10 minutes north of Parsons. It is situated next to farm fields, forest, Holly Meadows Golf Course (with an interesting pond) and the Cheat River. The wonderful West Virginia mountains surround the river valley.

Locations that will most likely be visited include Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley NWR, Dolly Sods Wilderness and more. Possible programs might include studies on local warblers and owls, and rafting on the Cheat was discussed. Show up and BRING A NEW MEMBER OR A FRIEND!

# 2015-2016 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

## Athens/Princeton

Tuesday, December 22, 2015  
Ron Canterbury 513-556-9570  
roncanterbury@aol.com (best)

## Washington Co., PA/ Brooke Co., WV

Sunday, December 20, 2015  
Larry Helgerman  
bobolink3@verizon.net

## Canaan/Tucker Co.

Sunday, December 20, 2015  
Casey Rucker 304-866-4114  
autoblock@frontiernet.net

## Charles Town

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
Bob Dean 304-754-3042  
bobdean52@gmail.com

## Charleston

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
Doren Burrell  
g.immer@doren.net

## Elkins Area

Monday, January 4, 2016  
Rich Bailey 703-307-1790

## Hampshire County

Saturday, January 2, 2016  
Vini Schoene  
bcws2@earthlink.net

## Huntington

Sunday, January 3, 2016  
Wendell Argabrite 304-736-5747

## Inwood

Saturday, January 2, 2016  
Bob Dean 304-754-3042  
bobdean52@gmail.com

## Lewisburg

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
Benjamin Handley  
ben@potteryalley.com

## McDowell County

Sunday, December 27, 2015  
Allen Waldron 304-573-3247  
awaldron@suddenlink.net

## Moorefield

Thursday, December 31, 2015  
Kathy King 304-538-7121

## Morgantown

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
LeJay Graffious 304-379-4492  
lejaygraffious@gmail.com

## Oak Hill

To be determined; contact -  
Geoff Heater 304-573-0111  
geoffheeter@gmail.com

## Ona

Sunday, December 20, 2015  
Wendell Argabrite 304-736-5747

## Pendleton County

Friday, December 18, 2015  
Fred Atwood 703-242-1675  
fredatwood@yahoo.com

## Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
Jeanette Esker  
304-863-8765

## Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 19, 2015  
Jim Phillips 304-466-1275  
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

## Pocahontas County

Sunday, December 20, 2015  
Rich Bailey 703-307-1790

## Raleigh County

Sunday, December 20, 2015  
Allen Waldron 304-573-3247

## Wheeling

Wednesday, December 16, 2015  
Scott Pendleton 740-942-3267  
tallyp2001@yahoo.com

## CONTACT THE EDITOR

Have an interesting story about the nature around your neck of the woods? Want to contribute an article or travelogue? Have a nature-related event that you'd like to tell the Club about? Please contact me by mail, email or phone:

Ryan Tomazin  
348 Station Street, Apt. 7  
Bridgeville, PA 15017  
412-220-9726  
wwwarblers@hotmail.com



## CORRESPONDENCE

We would love to hear from members of the BBC. What have you been doing? Have you taken recent trips? What interesting birds or plants have you seen in your locality or backyard?

The Club looks forward to little notes on Christmas cards and dues notices, but feel free to get in touch with us at other times of the year too. Even just a line or two would be of interest to our readers, especially if we haven't seen or heard from you in a while.

Correspondence may be mailed to: Juanita Slater, Corresponding Secretary, c/o BBC, PO Box 4077, Wheeling, WV 26003.

For those of you who prefer email, correspondences may be sent to: gusind@stratuswave.net

## 2015 BBC EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT

After leaving chilly, rainy weather and bare trees at home, we crossed the mountains to find the trees still in leaf, some even green, and fall flowers not yet frost-bitten. Some of the beaches were windy, but for the most part, our whole trip had nice weather.

Seventeen intrepid BBCers met at the Drifting Sands ocean front hotel in Shipbottom, New Jersey. Grabbing a quick breakfast before embarking on our birding adventure, we picked up our box lunches and drove to Long Beach Island, location of the Barnegat Lighthouse. We birded along the shore front and surrounding area, getting some nice water birds: Ruddy Turnstones, Laughing Gulls, and especially a fly-by of three oystercatchers. We also had great looks at a flock of Boat-tailed Grackles. Two of the turnstones were not the least shy and allowed us close for photos.

Our next stop was the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Driving the loop through the marsh, we saw Brant, many ducks, (mostly pintails,) Great Blue Herons, Snowy Egret, and a Red-shouldered Hawk beset by crows.



*Brant*

Driving back towards Shipbottom, we stopped at a windy beach for Sanderlings and a Black-bellied Plover. Leaving at sunset, we went back to our hotel for a rest before dinner. After a nice meal, it was off to bed for tomorrow's adventure.

Friday (the 13th! Yikes!), we made a stop at Avalon, seeing Sanderling and Purple Sandpiper; then, on south to Cape May. From the hawk watch platform, we could see several varieties of ducks, Mute Swans, and a close fly-over by a Cooper's Hawk. Some of the group who walked further onto the trails saw a Black Swan. (Probably an escaped exotic.)

We ate our box lunches at the Lewes Ferry while waiting to board. While it was windy, we still had nice weather for the crossing and a huge flock of gulls flying in our wake. Among the gulls were also several gannets. Returning to the hotel, we rested a bit, then had dinner at Jake's Seafood restaurant and called it a day.

Saturday morning we had breakfast and then set off for Indian River, stopping several times as we headed towards Bombay Hook. Friends of the Henlopen Refuge were having a Christmas crafts and book sale. Several of us purchased colorful bird t-shirts and used books.

At Bombay Hook, we were thrilled to find a huge raft of Snow Geese! While we watched them, they were joined



*Bombay Hook had Snow Geese*

by a small flock of tundra swans. There were several blue-phase geese among them and at least two geese had yellow, numbered, collar bands. It was a thrill to see so many Snow Geese and even more so when they suddenly raised up and flew. They didn't go far; just changed their order, moving a bit closer to us.

The nearby area also held black ducks, Mallards, shovelers, Ruddy and pintail Ducks and an immature Bald Eagle. Returning to the hotel, we had plenty of time to prepare for the evening's banquet at the hotel, followed by a run-down of our bird list. The count was 107 species, a male Harlequin Duck, eiders and a Parasitic Jaeger being included.

Sunday morning, we had breakfast and packed up to head for home. After bidding good-bye to our friends until the next birding excursion, we started back to our various states, some of us stopping to bird at one place or another. Our group went to Gordon's Pond where we saw a kingfisher and a White-tailed Deer with unusual white spotted markings.

### Conowingo Dam

Eight of us left a day early for the Eastern Shore and stopped at Conowingo Dam in Darlington, Maryland. After a stop at the visitor's center for directions and a look at some of the entries of a bird photography contest, we drove down to the dam. There were black vultures everywhere! The trees, fences, curbs, light poles, and even the tops of some cars, were loaded with the sinister black birds. At the time we arrived, it was raining and foggy and darkening, but we could still make out quite a lot of Bald Eagles sitting on the rocks across the Susquehanna River.

It was still heavy overcast, but there was more light when we returned the next day. I saw more eagles than I've seen in my whole life here! The Black Vultures were still present, but not quite so close and numerous. Both they and the many Bald Eagles perched on the rocks along the river and on some tall electric pylons. There were both mature and immature eagles flying over the water and occasionally catching a fish which they often tried to take from one another. A few eagles were perched high over head in the trees along the parking lot. It was really exciting to see so many of these great birds.

– Report submitted by Rosie Campbell;  
photos by Neal Hohman

## 2015 BBC TRIP TO MAINE

Loons, lobsters, Laughing Gulls, sweet blueberries, and Mola Mola—were some of the delights our 21 members enjoyed during our August trip to Maine.

Our group convened in Bangor, Maine, where in the evening several intrepid lobster-lovers savored dinner at a local seafood restaurant overlooking the Penobscot River.

In the morning, our birding experts Bob Duchesne and Seth Benz met us to begin serious birding in the Bangor area at Essex Woods, a wetland. Although the hoped-for Virginia Rail stayed elusive, we had good views of Great Egrets, Green-winged Teal, Green Herons, Cedar Waxwings, and American Redstart. Flowering plants included attractive purple pickerel weed, and stunning yellow tansy and pond lily.

Then we headed toward our home for the next two days at Schoodic Institute. Schoodic Institute is an education and research center offering scientific programs for teachers, students—and bird clubs. The campus, site of a former naval installation, offers comfortable facilities for about a hundred students, and has a dining hall which provides excellent food. The Institute is located at the tip of Schoodic (which signifies “end” in local Native American language) Peninsula. Schoodic Peninsula, part of Acadia National Park, was once in private ownership but became part of the National Park Service in 1929. The scenic peninsula boasts granite headlands, cobbled beaches, and for the geologist, large igneous dikes intruding pink granite ledges. And of course seabirds. We spent our day birding around the Point’s 6-mile loop, studying views of offshore fog and more visible near shore Common Eiders, Laughing Gulls, and a Common Loon. Then to dinner and our lodgings, with the measured sounds of the Atlantic’s breaking waves throughout the night.

Early next morning, we climbed into our two vans and headed for Bar Harbor to board our large catamaran for a whale-watching trip which took us some twenty miles out into the misty Gulf of Maine. Well, the whales may have been watching us, but we certainly weren’t watching whales—not in that pea-soup fog. When cold waters of Maine meet the warmer land, fog in many misty shades is the result. However, several Atlantic White-sided Dolphins swam and dove right alongside the boat and those we could see. Our guide indicated these dolphins didn’t come close to shore, and we were lucky to see them since shore-bound folks would not. We also saw Atlantic Puffins, both flying and sitting on the water. These were from a near-by nesting colony. At that time of year, the puffins did not have their nesting-time bright orange beaks.

Gradually the fog fluttered away, giving us blue seas and skies—and good birding. We had excellent sightings of Red and Red-necked Phalaropes, Great Shearwaters flying and floating, Wilson’s Storm-Petrels, Northern Gannets, several gull species, and oh yes, that Mola Mola—er, what’s that? Turns out that’s a fish, also known as Ocean Sunfish. It is the heaviest bony fish in the world, and can grow to over a ton in weight



*Mola mola*  
—photo by Rosie Campbell

which is amazing since it’s preferred food is jellyfish. Mola Mola are flattened dorsally, that is as tall as long. Our surface swimming Mola Mola resembled a very large brown flopping mop. All in all, despite fog, an excellent pelagic trip.

In the evening we returned to Schoodic Institute’s dining hall, where our members got instruction in the culinary art of cracking lobster carapaces and savoring a Maine lobster dinner complete with whole lobster, corn on the cob, and potatoes.

In the morning, we headed for northern Maine and the town of Lubec, birding as we went. We noticed the transition to the more boreal type forest with its lacy-needled tamaracks and predominant spruce-fir forest. This is Spruce Grouse habitat, and we stopped at a preserve with the requisite habitat—these grouse dine on conifer needles—and we did find a Spruce Grouse dusting area under a protecting mossy ledge, but no grouse. In a bog we saw a Northern Harrier, and later in an open forest area we spotted a juvenile gray jay, a northern jay species. The jay hung around a bit, and we saw its distinctive buoyant flight. In between birding, we enjoyed eating the many sweet wild blueberries growing all around us, wowing at the brilliant red berries of ground-growing bunchberry, a small cousin to dogwoods, and enjoying the north woods fragrance of sweet fern, which is related to bayberry.

Still on our way to Lubec, we stopped at various tidal mudflats and inlets and saw Semi-palmated Plovers, Least, Baird’s, and White-rumped Sandpipers, and had excellent views of Black-bellied Plovers. Last stop of the day was at a cobbled beach with fog, and the only sound— the mist-muffled tide coming in from the Bay of Fundy.



Photo by SeaSide Images

Our motel, Eastland Motel near Lubec, was outside town and offered birding for Wood Ducks and various kinds of warblers and vireos, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. The motel also served delicious blueberry muffins.

Next morning, we left for the island of Campobello, located in New Brunswick, Canada. Campobello is the largest of several small islands in Passamaquoddy Bay, which flows into the Bay of Fundy. The island is reached by a short drive from Lubec across Roosevelt International Bridge, and of course clearing customs and immigration. The famous island with lichen-draped conifers and rocky headlands was once home to the wealthy resort set, and was the summer home of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. We had time to tour their attractive brick and green “cottage,” and see Franklin’s bikes and birch-bark canoe.

We enjoyed the trail at Eagle Hill Bog, part of the Roosevelt Campobello International Park Natural Area. This wetland began as a glacially carved depression. Now, sphagnum moss dominates the bog and grows so thick that vegetation has no contact with ground water, so plants depend on water from rain, snow, and fog. The bog is described as “cloud-fed.” We saw insect-eating pitcher plants and sundews, and bog plants including reindeer moss, which is a lichen, bog laurel, cranberries, and ragged-looking black spruce, a survivor conifer in this harsh environment.

Campobello’s rocky cliffs are awesome, nowhere more so than at Head Harbor Lightstation, located at Campobello’s northwestern tip. The rocks here are huge and dark, a type of igneous rock called gabbro. From this headland, you can see the Head Harbor Lightstation. The wooden lighthouse was built in 1829. The lighthouse can be reached by walking on the cobbled beach—but only at low tide, remembering that the Bay of Fundy has 28 feet or higher tides. From the lightstation, watchers could on a clear day spot humpback, finback, and right whales, as



Maine Rabbit  
— photo by Rosie Campbell

well as seabirds.

From Canada it was time to make our way back south to Bangor, although we made many stops on the way. We re-visited Quoddy Head State Park, as we had already checked that out. Quoddy Head is the easternmost point of land in the United States. The park is home to the West Quoddy Head Light. Established in 1808, it is recognized by its candy stripes. Strong currents between the light and Campobello Island drive the largest whirlpool in the western hemisphere. The park has several trails, and is a good place to look for Black-legged Kittiwakes, Bald Eagles, Northern Gannets, and Black Guillemots.

Continuing our way south, we did some beach birding which gave us all three scoter species, as well as two Peregrine Falcons and a Merlin. At another stop, Moosehorn Wildlife Refuge, which is managed for woodcock, we saw several different types of warblers, and blooming Turtlehead along a rocky stream, and Highbush Cranberry, also called Cranberry Viburnum.

Back in Bangor, for those of us with later afternoon flights, Bob and Seth—who seem to know the location of every nesting and migrating bird in Maine—kindly offered to take us birding until our flights arrived, so we re-visited Essex Woods, to see Great Egrets, Green-winged Teal, and a Least Sandpiper.

Bob and Seth got us back to the airport just in time to leap through security and onto our plane, where our compared checklists indicated a trip total of 101 species—and many happy memories of birding in Maine.

*Report submitted by  
Norma Jean Venable*

## TURKEY VULTURE CHICKS IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Exciting day today as Jesse Fallon, DVM, of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, came from Morgantown to take blood samples, weight, and measurements of the 52-day old Turkey Vulture chicks here at our farm in Ritchie county. He also attached cattle ear tags on the chicks' wings. This is for a USGS ecotoxicology study of scavenger birds in Appalachia.

– Cynthia Burkhart,  
Ritchie County, WV, 7/19/15



*Jessie Fallon tagging a vulture chick  
– photo by Cynthia Burkhart*

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR HABITAT MANAGEMENT FOR BIRDS ON YOUR PROPERTY

I have started a position with the National Wild Turkey Federation as the "Cerulean Warbler Appalachian Forestland Enhancement Coordinator". What that long title means is that I'll be working with a number of partners, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, West Virginia Division of Forestry, among others, to improve mature forest habitat on private lands for Cerulean Warblers and other species. While the program is still in the planning stages, please do not hesitate to reach out to me now if you are interested in financial and technical assistance to manage your land for forest birds like Cerulean Warblers. For detailed information about the initiative and Cerulean Warblers, please see this press release from the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture (<http://amjv.org/index.php/news/520>) and these brief habitat management guidelines ([http://amjv.org/documents/Cerulean\\_FS\\_Foresters\\_Version\\_Final\\_\(1\).pdf](http://amjv.org/documents/Cerulean_FS_Foresters_Version_Final_(1).pdf)).

I'll also remind you that if your property is located in the highlands (>2000 ft elevation), you may want to consider the existing Golden-winged Warbler Working Lands for Wildlife initiative (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/initiatives/?cid=stelprdb1046990>). Like the new Cerulean Warbler initiative, the Golden-winged Warbler initiative offers financial and technical assistance for performing habitat management on your property.

I'm happy to answer questions about either initiative and you may reach me using my contact information below. I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

Kyle R. Aldinger

Cerulean Warbler Appalachian Forestland Enhancement Coordinator

1550 Earl Core Road, Suite 200, Morgantown, WV 26505

Mobile: 717-557-4835

Office: 304-284-7595

NWTF: [kaldinger@nwtf.net](mailto:kaldinger@nwtf.net)

*(See advertisement on Page 7 for details)*

## WV/PA BLACK DUCK DATA PROJECT

West Virginia University will soon begin field work for a study of wintering American Black Ducks in western Pennsylvania and West Virginia, where data on their overwintering ecology is generally lacking. I, along with the PA Game Commission and WV DNR, will be documenting occurrence, behavior, and food availability. The first step, however, is finding the black ducks.

Therefore, I am writing to request assistance from this wonderful army of birders! If you spot black ducks in Western Pennsylvania this winter, could you please let me know? I can then locate the ducks, observe their behavior, perform food availability analysis and determine the quality of habitat that they are using. Any reported sightings will be kept between me and other researchers on the project.

If you do see black ducks this winter, please let me know by e-mail ([mlspindler@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:mlspindler@mix.wvu.edu)) or by filling out this form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZGNGDNS>. I also regularly read PABirds e-mails so I'll pick up any sightings reported here.

I greatly appreciate your help. Feel free to contact me with any questions or comments!

*Thank you,*

Megan Spindler

[mlspindler@mix.wvu.edu](mailto:mlspindler@mix.wvu.edu)



## OHIO CERTIFIED VOLUNTEER NATURALIST PROGRAM

A group of ten, including myself, just completed the first forty hours of the OCVN program. Meeting in three-hour sessions, twice a week at the annex of the Barnesville (Ohio) Library, we completed classes on stewardship of the land, teaching about nature, watersheds, aquatic life, geology, archaeology, ornithology, herpetology, botany, forestry, entomology, mammals and ecological concepts.

Our coordinator is Dan Lima. We were provided with an excellent handbook and good hand-outs with each class. Classes were taught by experts in their field from different colleges and universities in the area. The classes on medicinal plants and forestry took place at Barkcamp State Park. The aquatic life class was held at the Captina Watershed Conservancy headquarters, near Somerton Ohio.

The class now begins on it's forty hours of volunteer work in the field of nature.

– *Contributed by Rosie Campbell*

For more information on this program:  
Dan Lima  
Belmont County Extension Educator  
740-695-1455 • lima.19@osu.edu

NATIONAL WILD TURKEY FEDERATION

## CERULEAN WARBLER FOREST ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

Take advantage of funding opportunities for private landowners to manage woodlands for forest health and wildlife benefits!



Forests are abundant in West Virginia, but many woodland wildlife species are declining. In order to thrive some species require active forest management that restores a healthy mix of cover and tree species.

**If you own wooded property like this** >>

you may be eligible for financial and technical assistance to manage your woodlands for game and non-game wildlife using research-based guidelines.



P. McElhene



J. Sheehan



T. Roves



To take advantage of funding opportunities, contact the program coordinator or your local NRCS service center:  
USDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider

Kyle Aldinger  
(304)284-7595 | kaldinger@nwtf.net

## 2015 FALL REUNION REPORT

Bethany College's Mountainside Conference Center was the location of the BBC Fall Reunion this year, and it was attended by two dozen members and speakers. Jay Buckelew worked hard to provide us with good programs and comfortable lodgings. This reunion also allowed the BBC Board of Directors to hold meetings important to the club and to the good of the order. They got a lot accomplished.

Evening programs included Joey Herron, speaking on his projects at Prickett's Fort and other locations, and Penny Miller, presenting on a trip she lead to Borneo. On Saturday morning, we were treated to papers from Chan Robbins (Birding in Trinidad), Bill Beatty (Banding Highlights from Goldfinch Ridge), Bill Hicks (White Pine Redistribution), Carl Slater (Unusual Birds from Eastern Shore Trips), and Jay Buckelew (Common Raven Range Expansion in W.V.). All were riveting presentations. On Saturday afternoon, Larry Helgerman and Mary Grey led many to Green-cove Wetlands in nearby Pennsylvania, where we missed on sparrows and soras, but were treated to flyovers by harriers and other raptors. Up the hill from there, we got good views of a leucistic Red-tailed Hawk. Those who didn't travel met Jay Buckelew at the College Biology Lab for a showing of study skins. Throughout the weekend, there was banquet food and good company. Oh, and 40 species of birds!

## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

*Likely record-early fall Bonaparte's Gull. This is one species for which I have entered many records into eBird during my historical data entry project, so unless there is a record buried in a WV Birds listserv post with a general title such as "Ohio River birds" or unless someone has a personal record not entered into eBird, today's sighting (Aug. 7) may be the earliest-ever fall record for the state.*

*The bird was a brown-toned juvenile that was loafing on the point a few hundred yards below the small dam that creates the Doe Run Impoundment on Tygart Lake--i.e., it was across the channel from the boat launch. It flew back and forth a few times from that point to the dam. Clearly the bird of the day!*

– Terry Bronson, Morgantown, WV, 8/07/15

*A Blue Grosbeak kid! I heard the chinks from across the field, coming from their usual spot - the line of hackberries and mulberries along the top of the hill. Sure enough Dad Grosbeak flew into sight at the top of a tree, big bug in his big beak, and soon his kid was following close behind, fluttering wings, begging for food. Baby grosbeak was persistent as a shadow, but Dad had other plans for this bug and disappeared behind a leafy branch. I saw Mom near that spot a little later. So far, just one kid seems to have fledged, but no doubt there are others in the nest soon to follow.*

– Deb Hale, Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV, 8/19/15

*As I write this sentence, there is a White-winged Dove on my porch railing with several Mourning Doves. When I first saw the bird, I tried to make it a leucistic MODO, a task at which I happily failed. Wow, that's Yard Bird #142 and County Bird #203, but who's counting?*

*Yesterday, a Peregrine Falcon flew over my house, which was also a new yard & county bird for me. This morning, three Black Vultures rode a thermal above the yard, for my first county & yard sighting of the year.*

*(9/05/15 - After a day's absence, the White-winged Dove is back. It was here with a dozen or so Mourning Doves, and just now, when the MODOs all flew off, the WWDO stayed by itself. I did see the black-and-white wings when it flew.)*

*(10/02/15 - The White-winged Dove has been here for a month now. It's quite aggressive with the Mourning Doves at the feeders.)*

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV, 9/3/15

*I pulled into the Georgetown Road/Old Georgetown Road Parking Lot. I just rode over there for some good Sanderling photos. There was a Great Egret, 3 Great Blue Herons, a Green Heron, a Spotted Sandpiper present along with several Killdeer...but, no Sanderling.*

*I had to go searching so I drove toward Hog Hollow Road. Just down the road, there is an un-gated road that goes to the lake, which I took, and immediately saw the Sanderling and its Least Sandpiper buddy. I then noticed a very large tern cruise by, Caspian Tern! I was taking photos of the Sanderling and the tern there were 4 Bonaparte's Gulls flying around, too. I then noticed 3 birds over on the far shoreline, kind of looked like pigeons by the naked eye, but then one dived into the water. 3 Black Terns!*

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 9/11/15

*Over the last two weeks, all of the regular owls have been calling near our home between midnight and dawn. It started with an Eastern Screech-owl calling about 3 am one night and about midnight the next day. A few days later it was the Great Horned Owl pair that resides along the nearby ridges calling back and forth just before dawn. A couple of days ago, I could hear the "Who Cooks for You?" of a distant Barred Owl. Who knows who will be calling tomorrow night?*

– Gary Rankin, Lavalette, WV, 9/11/15

*I was in desperate need of an evening outdoors given the beautiful weather as of late and the envy of all the photographs and good birding reports I have been seeing, so I headed out to Little Indian Creek. I certainly surprised myself by finding more Connecticut Warblers (2) than clouds (1). Little Indian Creek has certainly been a lucky spot for this dreadfully difficult species. Lark Sparrow was the most unexpected find of the evening. I believe I have only seen 1 prior in the state. This bird was feeding along the gravel road with a mixed flock and provided nice views before flitting away.*

– Derek Courtney, Morgantown, WV, 9/17/15

*Today while birding my work property (500 acres), I came across a massive mixed flock. Highlights were 12 species of warbler: a single Connecticut Warbler, Canada Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Magnolia Warblers, American Redstart, Nashville Warblers, Black-throated Blue Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, Pine Warbler, Palm Warbler, Tennessee Warblers and Ovenbirds. Other good migrants included Least Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Lincoln's Sparrow.*

– Wes Hatch, Capon Bridge, WV, 9/23/15

*I just looked out at the feeders and found a red-winged blackbird with a white bib on his chest and a male rose-breasted grosbeak with adult plumage except for his stripey head.*

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 9/26/15



*Black-throated Gray Warbler in Inwood  
– photo by Paul Saffold*



## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

When I got to little Nash Farm today, a surprise awaited me that stopped me in my tracks. I scattered a large flock of Northern Flickers - there had to be 40+ birds - that flew from ground, from trees, across the sky and settled in minutes out of sight. I could hear their familiar piercing cries from opposite corners of the farm, and also their "scissor-song." I stayed put and waited. One by one, the flickers returned to the grassy path or swooped into closer trees.

– Deb Hale, Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, 10/02/15

Here at the house yesterday, I heard a Great Horned Owl just before sunrise and saw a Red-shouldered Hawk just after. Then, at the hawk watch on Peters Mt., Monroe County, I saw both eagles, Osprey, Cooper's & Sharp-shinned Hawks, Merlin, kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, Red-tailed & Broad-winged hawks. On the way down the trail, I heard a Screech Owl. A great day to be out and about in the woods.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 10/07/15

This morning my wife and I saw a possible Black-throated Gray Warbler (female/juv) in our backyard. My wife got 1 picture of the bird. The bold gray cheek, and the yellow dot in front of the eye are visible in the photo. The yellow dots were very visible when the bird was looking towards us. The view we had was very brief. I know this is an unusual bird for this state and is new to me.

– Paul Saffold, Inwood, WV, 10/14/15

I stopped at the Montrose Wetlands along Rt 219 this morning (10/20/15) I was hoping for a Sora & a Marsh Wren. I got 2 Marsh Wrens. There were at least 5 Swamp Sparrows present. The most unusual thing I found was several goldfinches down in the cattails. They were actively feeding in the cattails, never have seen that before.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 10/20/15

A couple of days ago, I birded with Wendell Argabrite and Mike Griffith as we went up Rt2 to Green Bottom WMA and the Robert C. Byrd Locks & Dam. We were only out about 3 hours but managed to find one Orange-crowned Warbler, three Lincoln's Sparrows and a Great Egret at GBWMA. At RCBL&D we looked for the Nelson's Sparrow that Mike had found earlier in the week, but no luck. However, we did find an American Avocet in winter plumage and lots of Savannah Sparrows.

Sunday, I got up early and made a trip to Cranberry Glades to look for the Red Crossbills. I got there about 9 am and wasn't disappointed - about 20 or so were in the trees near the Visitor's Nature Center and working the gravel near the building. After leaving the Nature Center, I drove to the end of the road leading to the boardwalk and then returned to parking area at the boardwalk. I was surprised at the large number of Blue-headed Vireos in the area, seeing or hearing over 25-30 in the woods along the road. There was a Ruffed Grouse drumming at the boardwalk with Swamp, Song and White-throated Sparrows and a Hermit Thrush in the areas near the boardwalk. I also came across several Red- and White-breasted Nuthatches, Black-capped Chickadees, and a variety of woodpeckers (Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Pileated, N. Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker). You could hear them calling in the woods along the road and at the boardwalk. The woods along the road also held Golden-crowned Kinglets (12+), Brown Creepers (at least 3) and a small flock of Pine Siskins (6). My biggest surprise came as I drove back from the end of the road toward the parking area at the boardwalk. A Barred Owl flew out of a tree near the road and flew about 100 feet along the woods to another tree, alighting on a bare branch. The owl was slightly behind the trunk which was smaller than the owl was wide. As I watched the owl through my binoculars, it watched me back! Sometimes it would peer around the tree trunk and watch me with one eye, while hiding the other half of its head behind the trunk. Then it would look around the trunk the other way doing the same thing. Eventually, I drove on to the boardwalk and the owl went back to doing what it was doing before my intrusion.

– Gary Rankin, Lavalette, WV, 10/21/15

I have never seen so many ruby-crowned kinglets in one day. My tally for the day was 121 at 7 locations with 45 at Brushy Fork Lake (30 in one cedar tree) and 39 at Little Stony Lake, both in the Sugar Grove area. I have reported RC Kinglet to ebird 724 times and these are my two highest counts anywhere.

The most unusual bird of today was a Bonaparte's Gull at S Mill Creek Lake. 235 Turkey Vultures and 30 Black Vultures rising in 3 thermals at S. Mill Creek Lake! An amazing sight as they rose and spread out across the sky drifting off in all directions. As for sparrows: 61 Chipping, 53 Field, 5 juncos, 12 White-crowned, 93 White-throats, 2 Vesper Sparrow, 7 Savannah, 1 Lincoln's, 17 Swamp, 160 Song Sparrows, 11 towhees. Also, 15 Pine Siskin flying over cabin during and after dawn

– Fred Atwood, Cabins, WV, 10/24/15

I just had three surprises at our feeders. The first was the appearance of four Dark-eyed Juncos on the ground under the feeders - the first of the autumn. Next came three Eastern Bluebirds (two males and a female) drinking at our water bath. The last was the biggest surprise. A Cape May Warbler began feeding on the suet. I even have photos to prove the latter. That is a new yard bird for me here in Harman. I love surprises!

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 10/30/15

### – Sightings taken from WVBird ListServ



Late Cape May Warbler  
– photo by Herb Myers

## CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

### NEW MEMBERS

Susan Walker Lampe  
455 East Ruth Brown Rd., N.E.  
McConnelsville, OH 43756  
Tel: 609-432-9913  
Email: susan11359@aol.com

Robert A. Silvester  
15 Hickory Heights  
Belington, WV 26250  
Tel: 304-613-8548  
Email: rasilvester@hotmail.com

### EMAIL ADDRESS CHANGES

Jim Smith  
jallbee77@gmail.com

## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

### HANDLAN CHAPTER

**January 9, 2016** – Bald Eagle Count on the New and Bluestone Rivers. Coordinated by Jim Phillips. Contact Bev Wright for information.

**January 11, 2016** – 6:30pm meeting at South Charleston Library. A show and tell session or educational DVD/webinar.

**February 22, 2016** – 6:30pm meeting at South Charleston Library. Doug Wood will discuss Ward Hollow (behind the ponds at the old DOW building). We may follow-up with a later field trip.

**February 27, 2016** – February Ward Hollow Outing from 9 - 11am. Doug Wood will lead a field trip in Ward Hollow.

**March 5, 2016** – Bald Eagle Count on the New and Bluestone Rivers. Coordinated by Jim Phillips. Contact Bev Wright for information.

**March 21, 2016** – 6:30 meeting at South Charleston Library. Jim Triplett will discuss his trip to Maine.

## NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

### POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

**December 21, 2015** – Bird walk at Harpers Ferry National Park 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (meet at the Train Station). Join Deb Hale on a birding trip in Harper's Ferry National Park along the Potomac Street Dam. The event is free and anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills. Children are welcome as well. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged but not required.

The trip will involve about 3 miles of walking along some unpaved roads, mostly level terrain. Birds expected to be seen include wrens, thrushes, sparrows, raptors and waterfowl.

For those that are interested, Deb has extended a gracious invitation to a light lunch of soup at her house following the walk. Please feel free to join her on this winter solstice and enjoy time with fellow birders and friends. Deb's house is located just up the hill in Harpers Ferry.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress for the prevailing weather conditions and bring along drinking water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them. The trip will be canceled in the event of bad weather.

For more information, please contact Deb Hale at debhale72@gmail.com or 304-535-2346.

### WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

Check January 2016 events on <http://www.wvstateparks.com/calendar.html>, where you'll find many January 1st "First Day" hikes to begin your year in the beauty of the West Virginia woods and wilds, led by experienced naturalists that will help you to enjoy our outdoors. Start the New Year off right by participating in these nice outdoor events.

### *From the desk of Jim Phillips*

I am making room on book shelves and have decided to get rid of some Birding magazines. I don't want to send them to the landfill and I don't want money for them. I prefer to give them free to a good home.

Issues include:

Oct. 2002 Vol 34 #5  
Dec 2003 Vol 35 #6  
2004 Vol 36 #1 & #2  
2005 Vol 37 #2 #3 #4 #5 #6  
2006 Vol 38 #1 #2 #3 #4 #6  
2007 Vol 39 #1 - #6  
2008 Vol 40 #1 - #6  
2009 Vol 41 #1 - #5  
2010 Vol 42 #1 - #6  
2011 Vol 43 #1 - #6  
2012 Vol 44 #1 #3 #5 #6  
2013 Vol 45 #1 - #6  
2014 Vol 46 #2 - #6

Anyone interested could arrange with me to come pick them up. Or if they will pay postage, I will mail them.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV  
Email: jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com  
Tel: 304-466-1275

## BIBBEE BIG SIT ON 10/10/15

Well, sometimes with nasty weather we get some good birds. Alma Lowry and I arrived at daylight to a sound that I knew, but couldn't remember, that turned out to be 2 Black-bellied Plovers. If we do this again, we need more help in the early morning when there is lots of bird activity. It got a little too busy for two old ladies. Later we had a bird we just had no clue what it was. After finding it again later in the day, we confirmed the id as a Common Gallinule. Thanks to everyone who counted. Our total was 47 species.

– Mindy Waldron, President,  
Bibbee Nature Club

# BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

## MARCH 4-6, 2016

### NORTH BEND STATE PARK

Time to sign up for the Early Spring Meeting. The meeting will be at North Bend State Park. Come and join us for a weekend of fun, fellowship, programs, field trips, adventures and our board and general membership meetings. Registration and check-in time is 3:00PM on Friday with dinner at 6:30PM. Departure will be on Sunday after lunch.

North Bend State Park is nestled in the north-western section of WV and is easily accessible from four-lane U.S. 50 that goes from Parkersburg to Clarksburg across north central WV.

- Driving east, take U.S. 50 to junction with WV 31 South. Take WV 31 South to Cairo and follow the signs to the park.
- Driving west, take US 50 to WV 16 at Ellenboro, then WV 16 to Harrisville and follow the signs to the park.

The Friday evening program will be a presentation by Roger and Margaret Higbee, "To Alaska and Back: The Fun of Driving and Birding to and from Our 49<sup>th</sup> State". The Saturday evening program will be a presentation by Patty Morrison, Biologist at the Ohio River Islands NWR. Patty will talk about the unseen (underwater) part of the refuge, with special emphasis on the role of mussels in the river ecosystem and recent reintroduction of mussel species.

Other Saturday activities will include a visit to the Ohio River Islands NWR Visitor Center at Williamstown, WV, and birding in the Ohio River Valley or local birding trips.

The annual membership meeting will be Sunday morning.

**Deadline for reservations is January 31, 2016**

Make checks payable to **BROOKS BIRD CLUB** and mail to:

**Richard Esker**  
**104 Wellesley Dr.**  
**Washington, WV 26181**

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NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**FULL TIME – INCLUDES ALL MEALS, LODGING AND REGISTRATION**

2 PEOPLE PER ROOM \$150.00 EACH..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PERSON SHARING ROOM \_\_\_\_\_  
(Roommate will be assigned if no preference is given.)

SINGLE ROOM \$220.00 EACH ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**PART TIME - CALL OR SEND E-MAIL FOR PART-TIME COSTS.**

304-863-8765 [eskerrb@frontier.com](mailto:eskerrb@frontier.com)

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**INCLUDE E-MAIL OR MAIL ADDRESS FOR RESERVATION CONFIRMATION**



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**What a cutie!**

*– Neal Hohman photographed  
this Semi-palmated Plover on  
what was another successful  
Eastern Shore Trip  
More on page 3*

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