



THE MAIL BAG

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RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note

The BBC lost a great member in Wendell Argabrite in April. Many people contributed to make up a fitting memorial to him, pages 3-6. Many members might not realize how instrumental he was with the West Virginia Rare Bird Records Committee, so though a little 'extravagant', these remembrances from his peers and converts is the best way to show everyone how important he was to West Virginia birding.

On a positive (and terrific) note, the Brooks Bird Club website has been completely updated, both in look and in content. Thomas Helgerman, nephew of member and new website chairman Larry Helgerman, has worked with Larry and other club members to give us a bright and colorful new face.

There are many photos, a great interactive calendar that merges all events from the BBC chapters, comprehensive sections on club history and publications, and much more. Please take some time to peruse everything, still located online at www.brooksbirdclub.org.

Thanks also goes out to Matt Fox, who has been our webmaster for these many years since the first site arrived.

By the time you receive this, many of us will be traveling to Foray. If you are reading this while driving there, don't. If you are enjoying this from an armchair at home, perhaps pencil in next year's June Foray in Hardy County. Foray is a great event, and we always enjoy seeing everyone there.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JAY BUCKELEW

I hope everyone has had a chance to check out our brilliant, new BBC website. Visit us at <http://www.brooksbirdclub.org>. Larry Helgerman spent many hours pulling together the new website. It is colorful and full of information on our club's programs, history, and information from BBC chapters around West Virginia. Thank you, Larry!

Our site has many links to other birding websites, so get on line and explore the birding world with the BBC.

I am hoping to meet a few new BBC members in the field at our Tucker County Foray later this month. There is no better way to learn new birds than full-time birding at the BBC Foray. Our last Foray at Camp Kidd in 2011 yielded 126 bird species, including Common Mergansers, Bald Eagle, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Mourning Warbler, and Clay-colored Sparrow. BBCers will be birding, weed picking, and exploring one of West Virginia's most beautiful mountain counties June 13 through June 21, 2016.

– *Albert R. Buckelew, Jr., BBC President*

EARLY SPRING MEETING AT NORTH BEND

The bird club convened at North Bend State Park from March 3-6 for our annual spring meeting. Thanks again to Dick Esker for arranging everything for us.

Programs included Roger and Margaret Higbee's wonderful slide show with narration of their cross-continent trip to Alaska. Great photos and stories. On Saturday evening, Patty Morrison gave a very informative program on the unseen part of the Ohio River Islands NWR, and she taught us about the many varieties of freshwater shellfish in our river.

We birded the NWR, Middle Island, and south of St. Mary's, picking up many species that contributed to the weekend's total of 70 species. Meals were very good, and the centerpieces and favors were beautiful. We plan to return to North Bend next spring for another sojourn.

NEW REDSTART EDITOR

After 39 years behind the helm of the Redstart, Jay Buckelew has let us know that this is his last year as editor. We all owe Jay a debt of gratitude for his many years of service, and for keeping this tradition of scientific publishing consistent and good. Marjorie Keatley is also retiring from the associate editor and layout positions. Thank you, Marjorie, for all of the hard work you've put into the Redstart.

Our new editor, beginning January 2017, will be Casey Rucker, and layout and assistance will be provided by Ryan Tomazin. Good luck, Casey!

WENDELL LEWIS “SONNY” ARGABRITE, 75, passed away peacefully at his home Friday, April 15, 2016. He was born the youngest child of the late Forest and Alice Argabrite on January 1st, 1941, at his family home in Ona, WV. Wendell is survived by his wife of 48 years, Phyllis Johnson Argabrite; his daughter, Nanette Argabrite; and many loving family members. Wendell was a member of Steele Memorial United Methodist Church and a retired foreman from Special Metals. He was a proud member of the Company B 19th Special Forces Group, a member of the Special Forces Association as well as a member of the 82nd Airborne Association. He was also an avid bird watcher known for his love of sharing his knowledge and experience with other birders across the country. He had accumulated over 700 species on his life list during his 60 years of birding and served as a member of many birding organizations including The Brooks Bird Club, The American Birding Association and the WV Birds Record Committee. His generosity in mentoring and helping others was well known within the birding community. Wendell also loved to travel, and he loved being outdoors. He'd visited all 50 states, where he could be found backpacking, scuba diving, kayaking and photographing wildlife. He spent his life giving back to the community as a volunteer for many organizations, including The American Red Cross, Boy Scouts of America and as an EMT.



OBITUARIES FROM THE WV BIRDING COMMUNITY

William Revelie Agee died at Berkeley Medical Center, Martinsburg, WV, on Friday, April 8, 2016.

Born on August 29, 1931 in Martinsburg, he was the son of William Doddridge Agee and Louisa Mae Gourley Agee. He was a 1949 graduate of Martinsburg High School. He served as an officer in the U.S. Army during the Korean conflict and after his discharge, he resumed his studies at Shepherd College and graduated in 1958. He earned an MBA as well as his Ph.D. from American University in Washington, D.C.

Although he held various jobs through the years, including being an accountant for Interwoven Mills and working as a college administrator at Shepherd College and American University, his greatest love was teaching.

Following retirement, he enjoyed time spent in the Canaan Valley area and for several years had used his computer skills tabulating records of migration for the Allegheny Front Migratory Observatory at Dolly Sods.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of sixty years, Doris Jean Le-men Agee.

Bill was a former BBC member

Jeffrey Anthony Del Col, 68, of Philippi, WV, died Wednesday, March 9, 2016, at his home.

He was born on May 6, 1947, in Cleveland, Ohio. In January of 1971, he was married to Carol (Henry) Del Col, who survives at their home in Philippi.

He received B.A., M.A., and Ed.D. degrees from West Virginia University. In May of 2015 he retired from a distinguished 37-year career of teaching English at Alderson Broaddus, where he was known and admired for his erudition and for his ability to both challenge and encourage students.

In addition to nurturing the writing skills of his students, he was himself a writer. He had had a number of his poems and other writings published, and at the time of his death was preparing a collection of his poetry for possible publication.

He was an avid flower gardener, raising an impressive array of cacti, orchids, roses, and other flowering plants; and a dedicated birdwatcher with an encyclopedic knowledge of the birds of West Virginia.

Jeff was a frequent contributor to the WV LISTSERV

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:

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We want to note the passing of **Anne Shreve**, of Florida, formerly of St. Albans, on April 15, at age 89. She is survived by her husband, Harvey. Anne had been quite active in Handlan Chapter and Brooks Bird Club in the 1960's through the 80's. She was a licensed bird bander and was art editor for The Redstart for more than 20 years. There are still those of us in the Charleston area who fondly remember the hawk watches Anne hosted on a knob on her property near South Charleston and Kanawha State Forest. An accomplished painter, Anne devoted her later years to her art.

Her work can be found in public and private collections including the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; the Clay Center, Charleston, WV; the University of Charleston; the Naples Museum of Art; the Von Liebig Center for the Arts, Naples, Florida; Sweet Briar College; the WV Governor's Mansion and the collection of Senator and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller IV.

– Cynthia D. Ellis

WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF WENDELL ARGABRITE

(in lieu of our usual Big Day highlights, we'll honor Wendell, who contributed to so many of those in his life)

Wendell Argabrite, one of WV's most avid birders, passed away yesterday after a long illness. Everyone who knew Wendell, even briefly, could see his excitement and passion for all aspects of bird-watching. While he traveled widely across North America in search of birds, most of his birding time was spent in the Mountain State, especially the lower Ohio Valley of WV.

Wendell started bird-watching in the 1950s, inspired and mentored by the late Leon Wilson. His long history of birding in WV gave him a special perspective on the changing landscape of the state's birds. Wendell was a life-long member of the Brooks Bird Club and contributed in many ways to the WV birding community. He will certainly be missed.

– Mike Griffith, Huntington, WV

Wendell Argabrite was one of my heroes. His knowledge, skill, and passion inspired me from the first time I met him. Our community has lost one of its greatest. If I ever get a Pine Grosbeak in my yard, it will be dedicated to Wendell.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV

I echo the many fine memories of Wendell(Sonny). I arrived in WV in 1984 and have known Sonny since the early 1990's having met him at one of the early Audubon meetings off Piedmont Rd. He was so knowledgeable on a diversity of topics, but he had a passion for birds. He was a great guy and very unselfish, always eager to help myself and others on finding birds. He had kept my WV state life list in his car and whenever he found a state species that I needed, he would call me immediately. In fact, he would call my office with a new state bird for me and I would cancel and reschedule my patient's schedule, so I could chase that bird. My secretary made up excuses and initially, my patients wanted to make sure that it was not a health issue. On future calls, they would say to my secretary "I know it's a bird". This was my ornithological emergency. He found dozens of state birds to add to my list and I am very grateful. Sonny leads the state with around 312 species seen.

Some of my memories include Sonny helping find a Northern Goshawk on Cheat Mountain on 6/30/2007, a Black Scoter on the Kanawha River. Sonny got a call from Kim Kazmierski of a possible Stilt Sandpiper at the Winfield Locks on 8/13/2007. Sonny knew that I needed it and we drove there close to dusk. Sonny just got back from Gambell Alaska earlier in the year and was familiar with the Asiatic vagrants and when we arrived, he looked ecstatic. He said "that's a Great Knot". We were so excited to see it.

We had a long distance 9 hour trip to Tom's River, NJ for the Pink-footed Goose and succeeded in finding it on 2/16/2013. We had a pleasurable dinner in NJ that evening with my son and daughter-in-law, who were residing in the state at that time.

Sonny taught me and countless other people about birds and life in general and we will all miss him immensely. I am so glad that I had the pleasure of spending such quality time with him and to meet his lovely family. His memories will live on having touched so many lives.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

Wendell's gifts were all the greater because he shared them so generously. A wonderful man, a great loss, and he will be deeply missed.

– Bev Delidow, Huntington, WV

Sad indeed, a great passion for birds is an understatement! Wendell will be missed tremendously! West Virginia birding has a foundation of information as a result of his endless pursuit of finding and listing birds. The last time I was with him at the Bird Records Committee Meeting last month he still swore he saw a Western Grebe back in the early 1960s and mused that the record was never accepted for the WV list. Loved his passion and enthusiasm! We all will truly miss him!

– Joey Herron, Fairmont WV

Wendell was very generous. I stayed with him two years ago when he unsuccessfully tried to help me find a Least Bittern at Green Bottom WMA. It was still a good day. He will be missed.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV

I was very saddened at the news of Wendell's passing. He was certainly a momentous force for birding in our lovely mountain state. His unflinching passion for WV birding, and documentation of same, led him to be the longtime secretary of the state's bird records

Continued on Page 4



*Wendell in New Jersey with David Patick (left)
– photo from David Patick*

committee. In fact, I am unsure just how many decades Wendell devoted to this aspect of his passion. His dedication to WV's birding community will live long into the future. We'll miss you Wendell!

– Wil Hershberger, Hedgesville, WV

We have indeed lost the keystone for several generations of WV birders. Wendell Argabrite's contributions to the knowledge of WV birds could hardly be overstated. From finding new and uncommon species to guiding young birders in the nuances of the sport he was clearly inspired when in the field.

It was a high point of my early birding when Wendell, Arlene, Mike, and Janet came to the eastern panhandle to start a "big day" which would lead them back to Huntington by dark. He was thrilled when he was able to hear the chuck-will's-widow on the other side of Back Creek. I think the Huntington crew ended the day with a common nighthawk for 125 while Stan Corwin-Roach, Rodney Bartgis, and I got 127 in Berkeley and Jefferson

Counties; our best ever here. Wendell would later surpass that by quite a few on several occasions with other combinations of birding friends.

He and I shared the joy of hearing loss which forced us to constantly use our eyes to help compensate. When he invited me to Huntington to make a road trip to Cabwaylingo for my life Swainson's warbler his generosity and energy were on vivid display. Neither of us heard the bird, by the way. We spent the day visiting one good birding spot after another; RCB L&D, Green Bottom, Crab Creek, and other unnamed habitats.

But the most profound memories are of species after species of state record birds being culled from habitats that were heavily birded by many of the best in the state. Wendell was relentless and accomplished in ways that most of us can only appreciate from a distance. The rewards spoke for themselves. His documentation was generally flawless.

My sincere condolences to Phyllis and all his birding friends who were blessed to spend so much time with a man whose passion just had to be shared.

– Bob Dean, Near Whitehall, VA

Sorry to hear about Wendell. He contributed so much to the knowledge of the birds of the state. I met him through Leon Wilson, another great WV bird person. I remember him coming to our house when we first moved to Pipestem to see golden-winged warblers. I am glad to have known him.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

I can only say that all the kind comments on Wendell's value to West Virginia birding cannot overstate his importance and value. He will be greatly missed.

– Jon Benedetti, Vienna, WV

Sorry to hear about Wendell. Our paths crossed numerous times at RCB and Greenbottom. He'd have his scope out and invite me and a friend to view those darn shore birds. A couple of times he dragged out his scope and set it up when he'd seen something he wanted to share and I always appreciated his sparing me some of his time and knowledge. A few times we'd going in opposite directions on those gravel roads and he would pull up beside us and greet us, then we'd talk birds. As others have said, he was generous with his time, and lived and breathed birds. I'll miss seeing him patrolling Rt. 2.

– Susan A., WVBIRD LISTSERV

To the Wendell Argabrite family and closest friends,

Words seem inadequate to express the loss the West Virginia birding community is experiencing for the loss of Wendell Argabrite. I always considered Wendell Argabrite to be the ROCK STAR of West Virginia birding, and hoped I could have the chance to bird with him someday. I was fortunate to have our paths cross while I was birding in Berkeley County, WV in November 2011. We met each other at the scene of where a Rufous Hummingbird had been coming to a feeder at a private residence.

I remember us comparing cameras, (as birders tend to do), and having the opportunity to appreciate the beautiful Rufous Hummingbird that appeared so out of place for that time of year, and that posed for so many birders photos. I remember that day was sunny, but cold, and I could see my breath when I exhaled. I was impressed at how far he had traveled in possibly adverse weather, just to see that tiny bird. That was the dedication to West Virginia birding that Wendell earned a reputation for.

With deepest sympathy,

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV

"Guess what I'm looking at?"

These were the very first words I heard many times over the phone from Wendell when he had located a rare bird. He was a mentor to me and I'll never forget his voice and sense of humor. He opened up his wealth of knowledge to this fledgling birder and taught me many nuances of birding, not only in identification but more importantly "how" to bird.

He served his community and country with distinction. Who could ask for a bigger role model. My heart felt sympathies go out

to his friends and family. His contributions to the WV ornithological record are huge and will always be there. So, if you ever out in the field and see someone having a tough time trying to find a bird, ID a bird or whatever, take time to encourage and help them. Wendell took time to do that for me. The paybacks are off the charts for you and them. I will miss Wendell greatly. I loved the man.
– Matt Orsie - Hedgesville, WV

Over the years I've had the chance to bird with Wendell a few times, and he was one of the first people that helped my wife and I on locations of where to find certain birds. The man was an atlas of locations on where to find birds anywhere in the country.

We were going to the Delmarva Peninsula and I was desperate to spot an American Oystercatcher. He gave us step by step directions on where we could find it. We went to that location and I was amazed that I could see one right through the windshield, probably only about 40 yards away. He also spotted and shared his scope so my wife and I could see our first Wilson's Phalaropes.

It was also great to listen to Wendell as he told his birding adventures of the past; and they were adventures. I'm going to miss him.
– Rennie Talbert, Barboursville, WV

With the passing of Wendell (Sonny) Argabrite, there is no doubt that we have lost one of the most avid, knowledgeable and generous birders in the State. Mike Griffith's posting of Wendell's passing described him and his contributions to West Virginia birding so eloquently, as have many of the posts that others have provided. I certainly echo all those platitudes, and I don't have words enough to express what Sonny has meant to me personally. There have been a number of folks who have mentioned how Sonny helped them find birds in West Virginia (and he certainly helped me find lots!), but I thought it might be worth mentioning a little about my traveling with Sonny on birding trips.

My interest in birding started in the late 1970s with a seminar on spring warblers that Leon Wilson gave at the Huntington Galleries (now the Huntington Museum of Art). Leon served as an early mentor to me (and Sonny) and encouraged me to join the Huntington Tri-State Audubon Society, which I did. I first met Sonny when he gave a program at an Audubon meeting on birds seen on one of his trips around the country. It was amazing to me that he would spend a week or more somewhere - just birding! In 1993, at my wife's suggestion, I asked Sonny if I could join him on one of his week-long out of state trips, and he quickly picked out SE Arizona for our first spring trip together. He asked me to give him a list of potential birds I would like to see. Because of my work schedule, I couldn't go for a whole week, so Sonny went ahead and scouted for a lot of the birds on my wish list. When I arrived in Tucson, he picked me up at the airport, and we headed toward Madera Canyon, birding along the way. We camped out for the night at Madera Canyon, awakening to Western and Whiskered Screech-Owls during the night and Gray-breasted Jays in the morning! Over the next few days, Sonny found me 50 life birds, and I was hooked on traveling with him. It turned out that this was just the first of many birding trips together.

Over the years, we have traveled together to many states for about a week or more. After Arizona, our next year's trip was to Texas, followed for the next few years by trips to California, Florida and the Dry Tortugas, Colorado, and Wyoming, sometimes just the two of us and sometimes with others. But each trip started, at his request, with a list of birds for Sonny to find for me. While I would add several birds to my life list, he might get one or two new ones. But he was always excited when he found a new life bird for me. Sonny also made many trips with Mike Griffith (another frequent birding companion for Sonny) both inside and outside West Virginia. Sometimes I could join them on DELMARVA trips (pre-9-11) and trips to the upper peninsula of Michigan for northern owls, Gyrfalcon, and other northern species. Over the last few years Matt Orsie and/or David Patick joined in on trips with Sonny to find new state or life birds. But whether we found the bird or not, we always had a good time.

I also learned that traveling with Sonny meant stopping at a local grocery store (once we were on our way) to load up on Vienna sausages, Cheez-its, drinks (water and Diet Coke), etc. for him and Snickers, potato chips and Diet Coke for me before heading out to find birds. We stayed at more Motel 6s and ate at more Denny's than you can imagine. A new life bird often meant a celebration at Dairy Queen (my idea). When we would pass a place (non-motel) where Sonny had spent the night, he would say, "Gary, I slept on that picnic table a few years ago" or "I slept in that rest stop last year". I now find myself telling my wife, "I spent the night in that hotel when Sonny and I were here" or something similar. It rubs off on you. Spending many hours in a car together, you also learn a lot about a person. We often talked about "The best..." whatever. His best night's sleep was spent in Ocean City, MD in the back of his station wagon parked near the ocean during a heavy rain storm. The best key lime tart came from a now defunct restaurant in the Florida Keys. He had several "best meals I ever ate...", but the best breakfast burrito came from a service station outside Douglas, AZ. Driving during the afternoon often included one or more talk radio programs, and he brought music on tapes that he had made to play during night travel. They were special to him and soon became special to me as well. As was the recording of the radio program "Lost Horizons" that was played on many of our trips, usually as we drove overnight somewhere. We would always end our travels by figuring out which of the many species we had seen was "The best bird of the trip", which wasn't always the same for everyone.

I truly treasure all of the trips we made together birding over the years. All of Sonny's traits of generosity and birding knowledge were manifest many times over as we traveled around the country. I was particularly amazed at his knowledge of what birds should be in which type of habitat, no matter what state we were in. For example, we would drive up to an area and he would say something like, "There should be a Bachman's Sparrow in these woods" and within a few minutes we would find one. He would also strike up a conver-

Continued from Page 5

sation with birders that we ran into in the field or on a pelagic trip, exchange information and soon we were off in search of something new. It was also amazing how many people across the country remembered Sonny. A simple example happened when I was in Gilbert, AZ several years ago searching for a Streak-backed Oriole that had been seen at the Gilbert Water Ranch. As I was talking to a group of birders, one asked me where I was from. When I said that I lived in West Virginia, the reply was "I met a birder from West Virginia one time. His name was Wendell." This scene has been repeated several times, as folks always remembered Sonny!

You can never repay someone like Sonny for all they have done for you. Never. But I wanted to be with him when he got his 700th bird species in the lower 48, and if possible, I wanted to be the one that found it for him. As luck would have it, a White Wagtail showed up at a wildlife area outside Detroit, Michigan at a time when I could get away. He was at 699 for the lower 48 and only needed one more to reach the magic level of 700. So, we drove to Michigan, found the wildlife area and walked the mile out to the pond where the wagtail was being seen. After looking around the partially drained pond, I told Sonny that I would walk to the other side of the pond to see if it was over there. When I got to the other side, I found the wagtail, called Sonny's cell phone and told him it was on my side of the pond. While we were talking, the bird flew off and headed for where he was waiting. I told him over the cell phone to keep an eye out for it, as the wagtail was headed his way. It landed almost in front of him and he got #700 in the lower 48. I think that I was more excited than he was!

Today, we buried my mentor and friend. His service was well attended, and one that I will remember for the rest of my life. If I learned nothing else from Sonny, I have learned to always help others, whether in birding or other aspects of life. He was very special to me and is already missed very much.

– Gary Rankin, Lavalette, WV

THE BIRD CLUB TRAVELS TO KILLDEER PLAINS

Fourteen BBCers drove first to the Mike Jordan farm where we saw the big flock of Snow Buntings winter before last. This year, there being no snow, the buntings weren't there, but we did find a few Horned Larks. (Never did get buntings this trip)

The weather today was a bit warmer on the thermometer, but a sharp wind made it feel pretty cold. Some of us wished we'd dressed warmer when we got out to bird. A thorough check of the "owl grove" netted us no Long-eared or Saw-whet Owls. Wilma did glimpse what she thought was a Barred Owl flying.

Driving along, we'd seen several Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers and a couple of Red-tailed Hawks. Stopping at a low levee, we climbed the bank and found a huge flock of Tundra Swans. (Guess-timate about two hundred!) There were also lots of Canada Geese, and several kinds of ducks. In the marsh along the water were the most Tree Sparrows I've ever seen. They were in constant motion, flying back and forth in front of us while we watched the swans.

While we were there, a beautiful flock of Snow Geese, (approximately three hundred) flew over. There were some blues among them. Later, they flew back across and gave us a second look. Several stops at these ponds also netted us a few Greater White-fronted Geese and Trumpeter Swans.

Though we were out until dusk, we found no Short-eared Owls flying.

Thursday – Our first stop was at a wooded area where we usually found Red-headed Woodpeckers. It was too cold for woodpeckers this morning and we saw none there.

On a walk out a levee, we saw a few chickadees, Song Sparrows, titmice, downies and such. Back in the area where the ponds were, we found a really good bird, a Northern Shrike! It gave us a fairly good look before flying and another look when it perched long enough to set up the 'scopes. The shrike was a life bird for some of the group. We ate lunch in our cars nearby.

Driving along, we found a small flock of Lapland Longspurs in a cornfield. They were nearly invisible among the corn stubble, but some crossed a farm lane and gave us better looks. These were also new birds for some.

After lunch, a check of the further-away owl grove got us no owls. During the afternoon, we saw many more geese, swans, eagles, and harriers. One of the harriers was a beautiful "pale ghost" mature male. At dusk, we again waited for the short-eared owls. Just moments before we were about to give up, they began to fly. We saw several, three being in sight at one time.

Fri. – We drove about an hour and a half east to a small town, Remsen Corners, where a Brambling has been reported staying this winter. Parking at a small town park, we walked up the road and set up to watch at the place it is seen at the feeders. We waited. And waited. And waited. The man who lived there came out to replenish the bird seed and told us the Brambling comes every day.

The sun on our backs felt good, but our toes were getting cold. But we persevered. Suddenly, the Brambling flew into a bush by the bird feeder and dropped down briefly to feed; a pretty bird and a good sighting! This was a life bird for most of the group. (A few had seen it in Europe.)

After the thrill of this new bird, our group broke up and we all headed back to our respective homes. It was a great trip: 52 species and life birds for several of our birders.



Snow Geese in flight
– photo by Rosie Campbell

– Contributed by Rose Campbell

A COLD BBC TRIP TO KILLBUCK MARSH

Thursday, March 10th, a few members from the headquarters chapter, met folks from the Parkersburg group for a trip to Killbuck Marsh. We met in Sugar Creek and drove on, birding in the cars when we could because of the chilly rain and sharp wind. The light was poor and our windows dotted with water, so we had to get out to see much.

The ponds held a lot of ducks; Mallard, wigeon, shoveler, Gadwall, ring-necked and others, Canada Geese and Tundra Swans. The marsh rang with the song of Red-winged Blackbirds. There were lots of Tree Swallows zipping over the water and we had a fly-over by a Sandhill Crane. Quite a few eagles were seen, both perched and flying. It was great to be out, even with the chilly rain.

At noon, we had a nice lunch at the Pine Tree restaurant, The dining room overlooks a marsh area and a pine plantation, so we could still bird from inside while enjoying a hearty, hot, harvest soup..

Our afternoon trip was to Funk Bottoms, where we saw mostly the same waterfowl, a phoebe and a Swamp Sparrow. We went to our hotel early as it was colder, darker and rainier. Everyone was glad to settle in and get dried out.

Fri. March 11, we were back out in the Marsh early. It had stopped raining, but was chilly and windy. At noon, we returned to the Pine Tree for lunch. As we left the restaurant, the shrubs in the parking lot were alive with Cedar Waxwings feeding on the dried fruits of crabapples.

Later, we went for a short hike in Wright Marsh, a part of the Killbuck area. Most of the waterfowl here were at a distance, the trail becoming too muddy to go any further. We did see a couple more Sandhill Cranes fly over.

Our last stop was Shreve Lake, which is still drawn down as it was last year. There were a few ducks, Mallards, wigeon and someone saw a Green-winged Teal.

Dave Schroeder had told us where an eagle's nest could be seen, so one the way home, our group drove to Port Washington and found it. The nest can be seen from a country road that follows the Tuscarawas River. We were able to get a good close-up look at the eagle on her huge nest. Once the leaves come out, the nest will be much better hidden, but now it was easily seen.

– *Contributed by Rose Campbell*

NEW CAMP BROOKSIDE CENTER OPENS IN MAY

New River Gorge National River and Friends of New River Gorge National River hosted the grand opening celebration of the new Camp Brookside Environmental Education Center (EEC) in Brooks, West Virginia, on Saturday, May 21, 2016. Built on a 32-acre island in the New River, Camp Brookside originally opened in 1947 as a children's summer camp for the employees of Union Carbide in Alloy, WV. For years, campers enjoyed activities such as swimming, sports, and arts and crafts. During the 1960s, the plant opened the camp to family vacations and reunions. The site was purchased by the National Park Service (NPS) in 1993 and has been recently renovated to serve as an overnight facility and environmental education center for the park and surrounding communities. Camp Brookside EEC can house up to 38 overnight guests with seven cabins, including a fully accessible one with its own shower, a wash house with showers, and a large mess hall with a commercial kitchen.

Camp Brookside EEC is dedicated to becoming a premier destination for research, citizen science, and environmental education to create the next generation of park supporters and advocates for public lands. A variety of FREE events will be offered at Camp Brookside EEC during its inaugural summer. The NPS has partnered with Active Southern West Virginia to offer a series of outdoor education and recreation classes such as yoga, stand up paddleboarding, bird walks, and night hikes. A calendar of events, as well as more information about the center is at www.nps.gov/neri.

CORRESPONDENCE

We have lived 45 years (1971-2016) here at Milliken, Kanawha County, WV. Our 2-acre property alongside State Route 114 is half-forested and is bounded by the Elk River. During our first 44 years (through 2014) we recorded 180 different bird species. But just four different species in the "last" five years (2010-2014)... which is to be expected. Remarkably, the same number of new bird species (four) was seen here on our property during 2015. They were Black Vulture, Canvasback, Bicknell's Thrush and Black-throated Blue Warbler.

– Hulett C. Good

My daughter Susie and I made our annual trip to Magee Marsh on Lake Erie, May 5 to 8. We got 86 species, including 17 warblers. We usually get 20-some warblers, so maybe we were a bit early. But great birding, including brilliant shows by the Blackburnian, Parula and Black-throated Green, among others. We got Golden Plovers in the scope at the Benton-Carroll wetland, a lifer for us. There are now two eagle's nests near the boardwalk. At the closest one, we saw two adults feeding three young. As usual, a thoroughly enjoyable weekend. If you haven't been there, you've got to go!

– Bob Rine

One of the better things that has happened to me was to hear of, and to join, the BBC. Like so many who have joined, I wish I had joined (or knew about) the BBC sooner.

My first Foray was at Camp Caesar in 1955, and from then until moving to N.C. in 1999, I attended almost every Foray, plus many spring and mid-winter events. Also trips to Switzerland, Austria/Germany, the Maritime Provinces and Michigan.

Forays were also great for my children. They met quality people and learned a love of nature.

During those years, I served the board, the advisory committee, and the Foray committee. Also served one term as president.

My knees have been bone on bone and my balance is not very good, so I'm afraid no more BBC events. We have indeed been blessed to have had the BBC Experience.

– Ken Anderson

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

When I put meal worms on the tray the Bluebirds swoop in and devour them in no time. Yesterday I decided to actually time them and find out just how long it would take to polish off 100 worms. It was less than a minute! At that rate it doesn't take long to go through my supply. Since it was bitter cold yesterday I decided to do the late afternoon feeding a bit earlier so they would go roost on a full stomach. Nice idea except they were staring in the kitchen window when I got back from my dog walk at 4:40. So they were fed again. Of course they also eat sunflower chips and peanut suet. 10 to 12 bluebirds is not unusual. I'm considering making a new, larger tray.

The Flicker population is amazing too. Five or more are not unusual. They are all within 15 feet of the house feasting on suet. They also come to the tray right outside the window. Cute to see this big bird feeding along with goldfinches and bluebirds. The pair of Pileateds, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hairy Woodpeckers and Brown Creepers are also regulars on the suet.

Nice to have robins and Cedar Waxwings at the birdbath. People who are using a heated birdbath for the first time are always amazed and surprised by how much the birds drink. For whatever reason the Mourning Doves love to sit on the bath with their feet in the water. Definitely a worthwhile purchase. Going out there with a teakettle just doesn't cut it.

– Bruni Haydl, Charles Town, WV, 2/14/16

My wife and I skied up to Gaudineer Knob on the Randolph-Pocahontas County line today, where a small flock of Red Crossbills were feeding on spruce cones in the picnic area.

– Rodney Bartgis, Valley Bend, WV, 2/14/16

After today's unseasonably warm weather I visited Little Indian Creek WMA in western Monongalia County to see if American Woodcocks would be making their display flights.

I arrived at 6:18 p.m. and realized that the birds were already beginning their ritual. I heard the "peent" call repeatedly, and then began to hear the chattering flight calls of birds as they made their flights. I was able to visually locate 6 birds, and heard at least eight others calling. After 30 minutes of constant calling and flights, the calling ceased abruptly.

As I left the site, I stopped my car at the base of the hill to the WMA to listen for screech owls, and was surprised instead to hear a calling Barred Owl.

– Mike Slaven, Monongalia County, 2/20/16

In twelve years of feeding birds here in Dry Fork, I have never seen a squirrel try to take a bird at the feeders. Till now. A few minutes ago, a red squirrel, to which the Pine Siskins have become somewhat habituated, grabbed a Pine Siskin in its mouth, and feathers flew. The bird was able to get away, although I have no idea of its prospects for survival. I'll be more diligent in chasing rodents from now on.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV, 3/02/16

I was excited to see three pairs of Common Mergansers on the Dry Fork north of Harman between Snyder Road and the Riverside Mennonite Church this morning. I usually see the males arrive before the females, but these look paired up already on that frigid river.

The Pine Siskins seem to be increasing daily. They now empty my feeder by noon. We estimate there might be 200 siskins today swarming around. Maybe the fresh falling snow is bringing them in. They are fun to watch as they do their giant posturing to scare each other away from the feeders. The other birds seem to wait until the siskins leave to feed.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 3/03/16

A very conservative count - I missed quite a few - netted 630 Pine Siskins in my yard this morning.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV, 3/04/16

Wow! This is a yard bird first. At 6:00 PM, my husband and I went outside in the backyard during the rainstorm we are currently experiencing in order to set up an additional owl nest box. As we were carrying the ladder to the woods, we both saw a Northern Harrier flying low across the back side of our property. Its white rump patch was very visible to both of us. It landed in a tree at the edge of our woods patch in a neighbors yard where their lawn meets the woods, but the harrier didn't stay longer than a minute, then kept flying. I've never seen a harrier from my yard before, and the bad weather could have driven it off its normal course a bit. This is cause for celebration as this bird is number 115 for my yard bird list. Hooray!

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 3/13/16

First Pine Warbler of the year over here at Harpers Ferry this morning, singing in the woods at Murphy Farm.

My sweet little Ruby-crowned Kinglet is still frequenting the leather-leaf viburnum, which now sports open wounds from the one or two sapsuckers who have also found tasty treats along those slender limbs this past week or so. Kinglet was seen singing from the privet



*Osprey on the hunt
– photo by Rick Gregg*

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

hedge, too. He's feeling good. Optimistic.

Also, a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks were cavorting yesterday near the old Virginius Island nest, and the nest is looking spiffier than it has in recent past. Promising future. Love to watch the wee ones continue to thrive in the neighborhood.

– Deb Hale, Harpers Ferry/Bolivar, WV, 3/16/16



Adult Bald Eagle in southern WV
– photo by Rick Gregg

While driving East on US-Rt. 60 near Shrewsbury, WV, I looked up and saw this adult Bald Eagle. I pulled off the road in a safe spot and got several pictures. It was circling over the Kanawha River and being harassed by an American Crow. After circling twice, it caught a thermal and started climbing. Soon after that, the crow left it alone. I've seen at least three separate Bald Eagles in Kanawha County over the past couple of months, two adults and one juvenile.

– Rick Gregg, Belle, WV, 3/21/16

I went down to Tygart Lake State Park this morning specifically to check on the Bald Eagle nest and its status. Even at 60-power magnification I could barely make out an adult on the nest across the lake from the marina's south boat launch, and what looked like a small moving brown blob next to it. On my way out I checked again; the adult was gone, and I thought I saw 2 small moving brown blobs. So it looks like a good year so far.

Earlier in the morning when I arrived I spied 16 Bonaparte's Gulls out on the lake with plumages ranging from completely hooded breeding plumage to non-breeding plumage. An hour later the total had grown to 35 birds, shortly before they all departed.

I got my hopes up early for a 7-woodpecker day after finding 3 Red-headed Woodpeckers (at least 2 drumming) and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers soon followed, as did a heard-only Pileated Woodpecker. Later at the Nature Center a Northern Flicker showed itself. Alas, Hairy Woodpecker was AWOL, though there are numerous records in the park. This park is one of the best bets in the state for finding all 7 woodpeckers--at least until the Sapsuckers depart for the higher elevations to breed.

– Terry Bronson, Morgantown, WV, 4/15/16

This afternoon I went to the Eldon Haught Lake Recreation Area in Harrisville to see if the Ospreys were back yet. Stopped first at the upstream nest. Got all excited when I saw it was lined with down, although I didn't know if ospreys did that. I was scanning the trees, looking for the ospreys, when Honk! A Canada Goose flew up off the lake and landed in the nest! That explains the down! She settled herself on the nest and was still there 45 min. later when I left. Won't those goslings be surprised when they take their first hop out of the nest?!

So, I then went down to the parking area to check out the two nests that a pair of ospreys were building late last summer. There they were, a pair perched in a tree near the better of the two nests. As a boat passed below the tree, they flew up and circled around for several minutes, giving wonderful views. One settled back down on the tree, but the other settled down on the nest for a bit, then moved onto a branch. Then the other bird flew into the nest and nestled down, soon joined by the first one. While they were both sitting in the nest, a beautiful Great Blue Heron flew very low over the water below them and landed on a pile of debris at lake's edge. Eventually one of the ospreys flew back to the original nearby tree, the other stayed in the nest.

Then I saw a sparrow I had never seen before...pretty sure it was a Grasshopper Sparrow. It stayed in the lowest branches of a small autumn olive bush.

This evening at 9:40 we heard our FOY Whip-poor-will.

– Cynthia Burkhardt, Ritchie Co., WV, 4/19/16

This morning on our walk, the Chestnut-sided Warblers were back and singing. There was also the first of the season Scarlet Tanager. My mother taught me not to talk with my mouth full. Well, the tanager had a sizeable insect in its mouth and sang. After swallowing it, the song was more hearty.

The prize of the morning was a warbler singing a Golden-winged Warbler song. I saw it only briefly and couldn't verify whether it was a full fledged Golden-winged Warbler or a hybrid, which we have been having around here.

Not to be outdone, when I walked into the house, not one but two FOS Indigo Buntings were enjoying the oil sunflower seeds at our feeders. What a morning so far!

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 4/26/16

– **Sightings taken from
WVBird ListServ**



A beautiful melanistic Red-tailed Hawk
– photo by Doug Jolley, near Flatwoods

MARCH SOUTHERN WV EAGLE COUNT

Our 9th Spring eagle Survey was held on March 5, 2016.

Sixty-one observers manned 11 sites along the New River and its tributaries the Bluestone & Greenbrier rivers and Indian Creek (Raleigh, Summers, Monroe and Tazewell counties). Nine of the sites reported eagles.

33 bald eagles, 4 golden eagles and 4 unidentified eagles were found for the day. Two eggs were reported in one nest. Another nest had one egg and another was suspected to contain at least one egg.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

TWO NEW BBC LIFE MEMBERS APPROVED

At the Early Spring Meeting, it was proposed by President Jay Bucklew that Marjorie Keatley and Matt Fox be granted BBC life memberships for their tireless work on the Redstart and original BBC website, respectively. The proposal was passed, with no doubt to be had. Marjorie replied, *"Thank you to Jay for initiating and to you, the members, for approving an honorary membership for me. It is truly appreciated. I hope that I'll be able to attend more BBC events in the future. I miss that and all of you!"*

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

CHANGE OF ADDRESSES

Matt Orsie
409 Peace Pipe Ln.
Hedgesville, WV 25427
Tel: 681-258-5124
Email: wvbirdier@comcast.net

NEW MEMBERS

Stephen Kimbrell
P.O. Box 2816
Elkins, WV 26241
Tel: 304-636-2421

Mary Murin
1730 Woodland Dr.
Vienna, WV 26105
Tel: 575-993-8222
Email: sloinnm@yahoo.com

EMAIL ADDRESS CHANGES

Mary Grey
megrey45@gmail.com
Stuart Robbins
StuDriverSS@gmail.com

TELEPHONE UPDATES

Casey Rucker
304-866-4004 (corrected)

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

May – September, 2016 – Every second and fourth Saturday at 9:00 AM, join the birding group at Grandview NPS for a morning of birding. Grandview Visitors and Picnic Area. Meet in front of the Visitors Center.

July, 2016 – Date to be determined. Possible trip to Glen Alton Farm in Virginia. It is a great area to view birds, wildlife and flora, between Pembroke and Blacksburg, VA. Contact Mindy Waldron or Beth Nelson.

August 27, 2016 – 9:00 AM to ????. Trip to Bluestone WMA for birds, plants, butterflies and all things natural. Meet at Bellepoint Park in Hinton to travel to the area. Contact Mindy Waldron, mwaldron@suddenlink.net for information.

September 17, 2016 – 10:00 to 3:00 PM. Hawk watch on East River Mountain. East River Mountain, off of Rt. 460 near Bluefield, WV.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

Bring a covered dish, drink and lawn chairs to all picnics/trips.

June 11, 2016 – 2 PM Picnic/Field Trip hosted by Malv and Rosie Campbell, Bethesda, OH.

July 10, 2016 – 2 PM Picnic/Field Trip hosted by Andrew Strauss. Hot-dogs and hamburgers will be provided.

Aug 21, 2016 – 2 PM Picnic/Field Trip hosted by Bill Mead, Bethesda, OH.

Sept 17, 2016 – Fall Migration Walk/Field Trip, 9 AM. Meet at the Barkcamp State Park Office. Hosted by Scott Pendleton.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

June – Jon Benedetti 304-295-8945

June 15-17, 2016 – New River Gorge, Cranberry Glades. Contact for details.

June 23, 2016 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00 am. McDonough parking lot.

Aug. – Dick Esker 304-863-8765

Aug. 11, 2016 – Sandy Creek Backwater & area 9:00 am. Boat ramp, Northwest Drive.

Sept. – Jeanie Hilton 304-428-8641

Sept. 3, 2016 – Annual Picnic, 5:00 pm. McDonough Log Cabin "A", bring covered dish, drink and service.

Sept. 8, 2016 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00 am. McDonough parking lot.

Sept. 10, 2016 – Mountwood Park, 8:00 am. Beach area (near torpedo), bring lunch.

Sept. 15, 2016 – Lake Snowden, Ohio, 8:00 am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7; bring lunch.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

June 18, 2016 – 7:30 a.m., no cost. Join Joette Borzik as she visits the active and successful Purple Martin Colony at Mr. Hussion's house.

This event is open to the public, however registration is strongly encouraged. For more information and directions, contact Joette Borzik at 240-440-4221 or go to <http://www.potomacaudubon.org>.

CANAAN VALLEY NWR

June 18, 2016 – 10 AM, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge. We can watch birds without interfering with their activity by walking the trails. These are bird walks for beginning and intermediate birders on the Refuge trails. All are welcome. We have binoculars to loan. Meet at the Refuge visitor center at 10:00 AM.

JALISCO AND COLIMA, MEXICO BIRDING TRIP

Feb. 6-14, 2016 with WINGS Birding Tours was my first dedicated birding trip. The tour covered the Mexican states of Jalisco and Colima, which stretch south of Puerto Vallarta along Mexico's Pacific coast to Manzanillo and inland to Guadalajara. The trip was led by Steve N.G. Howell, author of "A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America." Steve has been birding in Mexico and leading trips there for over 30 years, so we couldn't have had a more experienced and personable leader.

The habitat of this area varies from the Pacific Coast lowlands—mostly thorn and scrub forest, with coastal marshes and lagoons—to the heavily-forested higher-elevation volcano slopes with huge trees and many thickets, but also many grassland and agricultural areas. Besides cattle, major crops seemed to be sugar cane, avocados, and mangos.

I recorded 85 life birds among 295 species, but about 195 of those were wintering U.S. birds or birds also resident in parts of the U.S. so there were about 100 completely new species.

Barra de Navidad area – The mangroves and scrub near the coastal lagoon provided many interesting birds during three separate visits, including Gray Hawk, Ridgway's Rail, Groove-billed Ani, Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Cinnamon Hummingbird, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker, Sinaloa Wren, Rufous-backed Robin, White-collared Seedeater, Stripe-headed Sparrow, Grayish Saltator, Orange-breasted and Painted Buntings, Black-vented, Hooded, and Streak-backed Orioles, and Yellow-winged Cacique.

The first morning found us at Playa de Oro Road near the Manzanillo airport. Highlights included Citreoline Trogon, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Ivory-billed Woodcreeper, Flammulated Flycatcher, Tropical Parula, and Red-breasted Chat. The road ends at the Pacific, where we saw a few distant Red-billed Tropicbirds flying about an island, Brown Boobies, and a Common Loon—one of the southernmost wintering birds of that species ever recorded. A wetland on the way back contained Least Grebe, Purple Gallinule, and Northern Jacana, among others. A mile down the road a flock of White-throated Magpie-Jays entertained us briefly.

After lunch, Steve chartered a small boat for a trip around the harbor and lagoon, where we found Neotropic Cormorant, many species of waders and shorebirds, gulls terns, Mangrove Swallow, and the Mangrove subspecies of Yellow Warbler.

The following morning we went to El Choncho Canyon north of Barra de Navidad. Highlights there included Mottled Owl, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Nutting's Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, Masked Tityra, Rose-throated Becard, Golden Vireo, San Blas Jay, Happy Wren, Fan-tailed Warbler, and Blue Bunting.

Volcanos area – The volcano complex west of Ciudad Guzman contains two major volcanos. The active one is commonly known as Volcan de Fuego and constantly spews white steam; the other, Volcan de Nieve, is slightly higher, topping out at just over 14,000 feet in elevation, making it the 26th highest peak in North America.

Birding highlights on the volcano slopes included Banded Quail, Band-tailed Pigeon, Squirrel Cuckoo, Northern (Mountain) Pygmy-Owl, Green Violetear, Berylline and White-eared Hummingbirds, Russet-crowned Motmot, Acorn Woodpecker, Bat Falcon, Mountain Trogon, Pine and Tufted Flycatchers, Chestnut-sided Shrike-Vireo, Transvolcanic Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Gray-barred Wren, Aztec Thrush, Gray Silky-Flycatcher, Crescent-chested, Golden-browed, Rufous-capped, Red, and Red-faced Warblers, Painted and Slate-throated Redstarts, Cinnamon-bellied Flowerpiercer, Yellow-eyed Junco, Rufous-capped and Green-striped Brushfinches, Flame-colored Tanager, Rusty Sparrow, Collared Towhee, Black-backed Oriole, Black-headed Siskin, and Elegant Euphonia.

Just north of Ciudad Guzman is a lake/wetland complex, where four of us spent a couple of hours late one afternoon, finding Mexican Mallard, Least Bittern, Reddish Egret (extremely rare inland and at 5,000 feet), Aztec Rail, Common Gallinule, Caspi-

an Tern, Lesser Nighthawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Lark Sparrow, and Yellow-headed and Brewer's Blackbirds.

Colima area – Colima is the center of primarily open agricultural areas, but to the northwest lie the approaches to the Volcanic Belt and the southern slopes of the Volcan de Fuego. We birded to the southeast the first afternoon, then the northwest and west the next two days.

To the southeast, we found Balsas Screech-Owl, Bell's Vireo, and Black-chested Sparrow. To the northwest the following morning, we had West Mexican Chachalaca, Elegant Trogon, Black-capped Vireo, Brown-backed Solitaire, Blue Mockingbird, and Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow. That evening three of us went west, seeing White-tailed and Zone-tailed Hawks and Great Swallow-tailed Swift, which had been absent from the area for about ten years.

We also visited a private lake/hotel/camp complex called the Laguna La Maria, open to the public for a 10-peso fee, where we found 73 species the final morning. Most notable were Green Kingfisher, Smoky-brown and Gray-crowned Woodpeckers, Vermilion Flycatcher, Spotted Wren, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, a very rare-for-the-area Black-throated Blue Warbler, Botteri's Sparrow, and Scott's Oriole.

Manzanillo area – East of Manzanillo, there is a large estuary-lagoon complex right next to the road. We stopped for about 15 minutes to observe the 3,000 or so birds present, which included Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and a number of other common water bird species.

The final trip of the tour was to the marshes near the Manzanillo airport before dusk. Among the species seen were a distant Snail Kite, Limpkin, Ringed Kingfisher, White-throated Flycatcher, about 10,000 distant swallows swarming prior to roosting, and several flyover Dickcissel flocks.

It was a wonderful tour with great weather, a great leader, and great participants. I heartily recommend it to any one.

Contributed by Terry Bronson



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The Eagle Has Nested!

*– What is becoming a more
common sight in West Virginia*

Photo by Rosie Campbell

Story on page 7

WHAT'S INSIDE

Editor's Message	1
Early Spring Meeting Report.....	1
Message From Our President.....	1
New Redstart Editor	1
Obituaries From The WV Birding Community	2
Wonderful Memories Of Wendell Argabrite.....	3
The Bird Club Travels To Killdeer Plains	6
A Cold BBC Trip To Killbuck Marsh.....	7
New Camp Brookside Center Opens.....	7
Correspondence.....	7
Interesting Sightings Around The State	8
Southern WV Eagle Count	9
Two New BBC Life Members Approved.....	10
Changes In Contact Information	10
Chapter Happenings/Nature Happenings Around The State	10
Jalisco And Colima, Mexico Birding Trip	11