



# THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA  
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OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2017 RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

## Editor's Note



Winter and Christmas counts and the prospect of rarities are on the near horizon. In the rearview is another wonderful memory of time spent in the grasp of good times and great experiences with both members and dynamic speakers. Lang Elliott and Bill Thompson both expressed their joy in being a part of our 85th Anniversary, and everyone enjoyed having them there.

So it is with an eye to the Early Spring meeting that we'll announce and introduce our speakers for North Bend: famed author and naturalist Scott Weidensaul, and Jeffrey Hall, a retired biologist and nature photographer who is originally from the area. Please make sure to attend, as both are outstanding speakers.



## PHOTO SUBMISSIONS NEEDED FOR WV BREEDING BIRD ATLAS

We are currently hard at work on the manuscript for the 2nd WV Breeding Bird Atlas, and along with that we're also hard at work compiling as many home-grown photographs as possible of all the states' breeding bird species. To-date, we've received a lot of submissions, but we still have a LONG list of species that we need photos for.

Our only desire is that the pictures be taken in WV during breeding season (or what looks like breeding species). Photos need to be unedited and not watermarked, and the subject needs to be focused and clear. If a submitted picture is included in the book, the submitter will get credit. Any picture files need to include the species name,

the county location, and the photographer's name. Please help! Our hope is to have the entire list covered, and we are planning to be done with all atlas work by the end of 2018.

– *from Rich Bailey, WVDNR  
wvbirds@gmail.com (email Rich for  
a complete list of needed species)*

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JAY BUCKELEW

We are basking in the afterglow of the successful celebration of the BBC's 85th anniversary at Oglebay in Wheeling last October. Thanks go to Cindy Slater, Carl Slater, and Ryan Tomazin, especially, among the many involved, for planning the event. It was good to see many old time BBC members and some new ones, too. We celebrate more than 85 years of existence; we celebrate 85 years of people engaged in our activities, outstanding publications, new bird records, two breeding bird atlases, new plants and animals, countless Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, Forays, Big Days, Sutton Searches, Eastern Shore trips, birding in foreign lands, winter and spring meetings, and all that exploring West Virginia's mountains, bogs, ponds and streams has done to bring joy to our BBC members, past and present. May the BBC continue into the future with the same spirit of excitement for studying our state's birds.

Thanks to all BBC officers and Board members for their loyalty and hard work. I thank past president Carol McCullough for her support and president-elect Janice Emrick and treasurer Scott Emrick for trying to keep me on track during my term as BBC president. I wish Janice success as the next president. I hope BBC members will send her their ideas for new activities the club might try and old activities they would like to see renewed. I wish all of you happy holidays and good birding this winter.

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

# 2017-2018 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

## Athens/Princeton

Tuesday, December 26, 2017  
Ron Canterbury 513-556-9570  
roncanterbury@aol.com (best)

## Buffalo Creek - Washington Co., PA/ Ohio & Brooke Co., WV

Sunday, December 17, 2017  
Larry Helgerman 412-508-0321

## Canaan/Tucker Co.

Saturday, December 30, 2017  
Casey Rucker 304-866-4114  
autoblock@frontiernet.net

## Charles Town

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
Bob Dean 304-754-3042  
bobdean52@gmail.com

## Charleston

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
Doren Burrell 304-553-8592  
g.immer@doren.net

## Elkins Area

Tuesday, January 2, 2018  
Rich Bailey 703-307-1790

## Franklin/Pendleton County

Tuesday, December 19, 2017  
Fred Atwood 703-242-1675  
fredatwood@yahoo.com

## Hampshire County

Saturday, December 30, 2017  
Vini Schoene bcws2@earthlink.net

## Huntington

Saturday, December 30, 2017  
David Patick 304-633-4450

## Inwood

Friday, January 5, 2018  
Bob Dean 304-754-3042  
bobdean52@gmail.com

## Lewisburg

Saturday, December 30, 2017  
Larry Davis  
Benjamin Handley  
304-646-0602  
ben@potteryalley.com

## McDowell County

Friday, December 22, 2017  
Allen Waldron 304-573-3247  
awaldron@suddenlink.net

## Moorefield

Thursday, December 28, 2017  
Jane Whitaker  
Kathy King  
202-966-6218  
304-538-7121

## Morgantown

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
LeJay Graffious 304-379-7505  
lejaygraffious@gmail.com

## Oak Hill

Wednesday, December 20, 2017  
Hilary Jones  
Geoff Heater 304-573-0111  
geoffheeter@gmail.com

## Ona

Sunday, December 17, 2017  
David Patick 304-633-4450

## Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
Jeanette Esker  
304-863-8765

## Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
Jim Phillips 304-466-1275  
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

## Pocahontas County

Saturday, December 16, 2017  
Rich Bailey 703-307-1790

## Raleigh County

Sunday, December 17, 2017  
Allen Waldron 304-573-3247

## Wheeling

Thursday, December 14, 2017  
Mike Hensley  
304-261-5687  
mhensley@oionline.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:

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Bridgeville, PA 15017  
412-220-9726  
www.warblers@hotmail.com



## BBC 2017-18 CBC INFO ON WEBSITE

Data from last years' WV Christmas Bird Counts is up on the BBC website at [www.brooksbirdclub.org/wv-cbc-results.html](http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/wv-cbc-results.html)

There are two ways to access the information on the BBC website: via the menu tabs, or the link on the "Home Page" under "Coming this Fall: Christmas Bird Counts". All data is from Audubon.

A visit to the CBC website can help refresh your memories of last years count, and you can check the results of other circles to see what you've missed.

Good luck to all the WV and bordering CBC counts, and remember to email your results to Larry Helgerman, and to the main CBC website as soon as possible.

## 2017 BBC EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT

The BBC F.E.S.T. (Fall Eastern Shore Trip) took place this year from November 8th to the 12th. I took advantage of the ease and affordability of the group van piloted by Cindy Slater and hosted by Carl and Juanita Slater. The Mercedes coach's high wrap-around windows proved ideal for group birding. With ten souls on board, off to New Jersey.

Some BBCers stopped at Conowingo Dam in Maryland to see "a gathering of eagles", about 100 (birds, not BBCers, and not the movie). The van group arrived at Long Beach Island before dark and checked into our lodgings for the first two nights. In the morning, the FEST group assembled for breakfast, 28 altogether, and set off for Barnegat Lighthouse. The weather and sea being very gentle provided a variety of birds, but not the eider ducks I'd hoped for. We did find Common Yellowthroat, Black-and-white Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo, along with Brant, cormorants and gulls. My first visit to Barnegat ended too soon, as we headed for Brigantine NWR, with box lunches en route.

Brigantine was another first visit for me, and I took full advantage of the extra eyes and birding experience within the van. We were told to look in a particular area for a bird, and had nearly lost hope, when guest rider Susie Wilson said, "what's that?" I hollered, "stop", and we all piled out. After a conference over scopes, we agreed to add Tri-colored Heron to the group list (and to my life list). Lots of ducks, shorebirds and others. At dinner of the first day, we tallied 104 species, a very good start.



*Everybody watched the beach for birds*

After breakfast, we checked out and loaded up to head south for the Avalon Sea Watch. The official site has been relocated from my previous visits. We discovered all three scoter species near the breakwater, and everyone had a chance to study resting birds usually seen skimming waves off-shore. Among the scoters was a single male Common Eider that Wilma Jarrell and I gladly added to our life lists. After visiting with count officials and looking at hundreds of birds off-shore, we headed for Cape May Hawkwatch. Riding in the van allowed me to enjoy the fall scenery while birding full-time. At Cape May, we found sharpies, coops, Merlin and others, along with clouds of Tree and Cave Swallows. We added a Lesser Black-backed Gull, pointed out by watch officials, and some passerine species, then headed for the ferry terminal. The ferry ride from Cape May, New Jersey, to Lewes, Delaware, was more tumultuous than usual, but lunch stayed down. Upon arrival, I learned that there were gale warnings for the Delaware Bay. We checked into our lodging for the remaining two nights and went in search of great seafood.

Saturday morning, we headed for Indian River Inlet. With wind chills in the low teens, this was the coldest morning. The group was experienced and well-prepared, so no complaints. I was disappointed the Razorbill I had seen here several years ago did not appear for the group. The sea being gentle, and the birds unremarkable, we set off with high hopes for Prime Hook NWR. Once there, we found Dunlins and sandpipers, ducks and swans. The refuges can be overwhelming with the variety and number of birds. We added steadily to the FEST list.

Our final stop on Saturday was Bombay Hook NWR. Our scouts reported golden plover from the observation tower, so we spent some time futility looking from the far



*Gathering of eagles on the Susquehanna*

side of a wide pond. I had told Carl Slater that I had to see Snow Geese before I'd leave, but not one was to be found. We enjoyed eagles and harriers, ducks and swans, jays and LBBs (little brown birds). As the sun began to set, the BBC magic conjured thousands of birds approaching from the west. We could tell they were geese, but could not confirm the species. With day ending, we started out the approach road. I considered consulting Sibley for a Snow Goose, when we found about 4,000 in this field. Pleased no to be walking back, I was content to view the birds from the van. A call went up for me to set up my scope for a Ross's Goose. Having previously wasted hours looking for this rarity, I was pleased that Barb Hohman had found a likely suspect. After another conference around the scope and time for many observers, we added Ross's Goose to the FEST list and to my life list.



*A nice group of Snowy Egrets*

Sunday morning was time to head home, with a stop at Broadkill Beach for the largest flock of Ruddy Ducks I've ever seen. The trip was a great opportunity to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones, while doing what we love: birding. While the BBC events can take us outside our comfort zone, both socially and bird-wise, I had a great time (and lobster roll) and recommend them to anyone with a bit of adventurous spirit.

P.S. - Somewhere I saw a Eurasian Wigeon, but it's becoming a pleasant blur. Four life birds on one trip.

P.P.S. - We had a total of 132 species.

*– Story contributed by  
Steve Hartman*

*Photos by Rosie Campbell*

## CRICKET'S LIFE LIST *by Jim Phillips*

Let's face it. Birders keep lists. Nearly all birders have a life list. A lot of birders keep a year list, a property list or a state list. My wife and I usually keep a trip list when we are going somewhere for there and back as well as a list of what we see at our destination. I often boast that at certain times of the year, I can have a list of 30 species before I get out of bed. We know people who keep a list of birds they have identified in movies or television programs. And how many times have you seen or heard a bird that is out of place for where the story is supposed to be occurring? Or how often have you noticed that television bald eagles sound identical to a red-tailed hawk? That creates an entirely new set of lists. Unofficially, we kept a bird list that we haven't heard of anyone else talking about. That list was for our most recent dog. Cricket came to us as a rescue dog from a wildlife management area in the western part of the state.

Cricket, the beagle-mix, took to us right away, and we noticed that she would watch birds intently. When we would sit on the porch, all three of us would watch the birds at the feeder. Like most fledgling birders, her life list started with the feeder visitors - both species of chickadees, titmice, both species of nuthatches, cardinals, blue jays, pine siskins, American goldfinches, house and purple finches, downy and red-bellied woodpeckers. Sure, she would clean up any dropped pieces of suet or sunflower seeds too, but she paid attention to the birds while they fed.

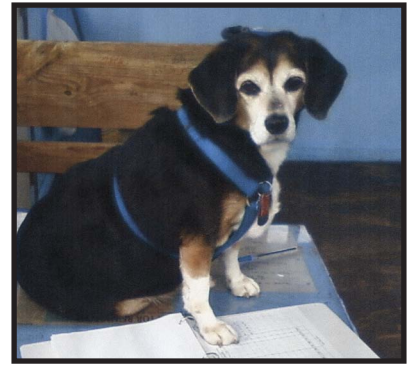
Next, we noticed that when we were in the yard she kept an eye on American robins, mourning doves and the occasional northern flicker. Also, she would watch the large trees at the edge of the yard. Her beagle heritage tuned her into the movements of squirrels and rabbits but when we would follow her gaze we caught her watching the likes of brown creepers, black-and-white warblers, yellow-bellied sapsucker and even a pileated woodpecker. Her life list was growing.

Often times, she would stand beside the car or the truck in the driveway and insist on going for a ride. Since we live so close to Pipestem State Park, it was easy enough to ride across the park to satisfy her. During these rides she watched for squirrels crossing the road and white-tailed deer grazing in the fields, but we also saw her watching some of the bigger birds. American crow, common raven, both vultures, wild turkey and Canada goose were added to her list. I admit she probably couldn't distinguish between a raven and a crow but then we all make our rules as to what to put or not put on our list.

Ten to twelve years ago, we began conducting eagle surveys in our area. Cricket attended most of these counts and soon ticked off her first bald eagle. On one eagle survey we were scanning for eagles on the banks of New River, Cricket sat between me and the river, looking me right in the face. Or so I thought. Turns out she was looking over my left shoulder above and behind me. As I turned to see what she was watching a golden eagle flew over us and across the river. We both followed its flight path out of sight over the far ridge. We have birding friends who would love to have a golden eagle on their life list.

A few years ago, we heard of a rare bird sighting in Claytor Lake State Park on New River across the line in Virginia. We didn't expect to see it but decided to give it a try anyway. Of course, Cricket went along with us. Several individuals and small groups of birders were milling around the park. We saw that Cricket was looking straight up so we checked it out and discovered a peregrine falcon flying overhead. I figured the other folks might want to see it so I started pointing up and saying "peregrine falcon, peregrine falcon!" Suddenly, a voice from a nearby boat yelled "No, there are two peregrine falcons!"

We struck up a conversation with the fellow in the boat and discovered we knew each other through the Hawk Migration Association of North America. He contributed the data for the famous hawk watch site, Mendota Tower, on the Tennessee/Virginia border and I submit the data from Hanging Rock Tower on Peters Mountain in Monroe County, West Virginia. He had just left the location of the rare bird and offered to take us to see it. We declined because it was a warm October afternoon, and it was too hot to leave Cricket in the car. When he told us to put her in the boat as



well, we couldn't resist. A short boat ride around the bend put us under a large sycamore. On the lowest limb above the water sat a brown booby! We were only a few feet from this rare bird, actually too close for binoculars. As we watched it, Cricket moved to the highest point in the boat near the bird. She looked at it, sniffed it and then let out a "woof". What a life bird for a beagle mix!

At a later date, I did a talk for a bird club in Blacksburg, Virginia. I related the story of Cricket, maybe being the only beagle mix in the country to have seen a brown booby. Most of those in attendance got a chuckle out of my story except one elderly fellow who was mumbling under his breath. I moved closer to be sure of what he was saying. Apparently, he had made 17 trips to see the bird and didn't get to see it. And here my "goshdarn (only he didn't say goshdarn) dog got to see it!"

We lost our Cricket dog to canine cancer this past Groundhog Day. We miss her a lot, but we sure had a lot of good times with the best four-legged birder we have ever known.

### BNC Donates Books to Summers Co. Public Library



Two nature books were dedicated and donated to the Summers County library by the Bibbee Nature Club. They were dedicated for Anne McRae, and her deceased husband, Grady

## OUR BELLAVISTA ECUADOR ADVENTURE *by Casey Rucker*

For our second annual tropical birding trip, my friends Lonny Frye and Bob Shackleton and I had decided to spend all our eight days on the ground at one home base, and had selected an eco-lodge in a private preserve high in the Tandayapa Valley just west of the heights of the Andes Mountains and south of the equator. On the evening of March 28 we arrived in Quito, a glittering sprawl of a city set amid the high mountains. It was a two-hour drive to the Bellavista Lodge, in which I had a chance to attempt my work-in-progress Spanish with a friendly and knowledgeable driver, Carlos.

We were visiting during the rainy season, which is considered winter in this land of the two seasons, and Carlos had told me that there weren't many birds or tourists around now. So the evening we arrived I tried to lower my expectations for birds and get ready just to enjoy hiking and experiencing the cloud forest.

Wednesday morning at the lodge erased any doubts about the birding. When we emerged from our rooms the trees were dripping with birds. We were to learn that the 'trash birds' of the area were spectacularly beautiful, including such hummingbirds as the Booted Racket-Tail and Buff-tailed Coronet, as well as the Slate-throated Redstart, Blue-winged Mountain Tanager, and Masked Flowerpiercer. We got our first look at other common birds such as White-breasted Wood-Wren, the four local brush finches, and the amazing tanagers of the area. Blackburnian Warblers were the most common neotropical migrants. The resident pair of Masked Trogons was cooperative as usual, along with a pair of Toucan Barbets. We listened to the calls of the Collared Forest-Falcon, White-faced Nunbird, and Chestnut-crowned Antpitta. Other new birds for us included Green-and-black Fruiteater, Striped Treehunter, White-lined Tyrannulet, Spectacled Whitestart, and Western Hemispingus. At the hummingbird feeders we saw Sparkling Violetears, Speckled Hummingbirds, Violet-tailed Sylphs, Purple-bibbed Whitetips, Purple-throated Woodstars, and Andean Emeralds. We ate breakfast in what we later learned was the last meal in the lodge's old dining room.

Next we got our first experience with Natalia, the wonderful senior bird guide at the lodge, in a walk up the road. Before others had gathered, she showed me several Blue-fronted Parrotlets before they departed the scene. On the walk we found Collared Incas, Turquoise Jays, a Great Thrush, and Russet-crowned Warblers, and learned the calls of the Smoke-colored Pewee, Spillman's Tapaculo, and Chestnut-collared Sparrow. Our delicious lunch was the inaugural meal in the lodge's new dining room, which boasted amazing views from the immediately-surrounding trees to the distant peak of the volcano Pinchincha. In the afternoon, on our own, we found the beautiful Gorgeted Sunangel as well as Sharpe's Wrens, Three-striped Warblers, Blue-and-black Tanagers, and a Streaked Tuftedcheek.

Over our stay the cloud forest was true to its name, with light to heavy mists filling the landscape much of the time. Periods of rain could be brief or last all day or night, though it rained all day only once. We also had five out of eight mornings filled with sunshine. Narrow, steep ridges and valleys gave us a breathtaking landscape making a complex descent from east to west.

Thursday morning before breakfast we got a look at a juvenile Collared Forest-Falcon, as well as Green Violetears, beautiful Orange-bellied Euphonias and our familiar Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. We soon took a ride up the road for a couple of miles, where Natalia led us down a steep trail to a beautiful waterfall. When we got back to the road, we looked and listened for the birds. The most spectacular were four Plate-billed Mountain-Toucans, among the few vulnerable species we were to see. We also began our familiarity with species such as Barred Becard, Capped Conebill, and Dusky Bush Tanager. On our own that afternoon we encountered a Streak-headed Antbird, several Plain-tailed Wrens, and the beautiful Golden Grosbeak.

The next morning we were up at 4:30 to set off for Refugio de Paz, a nearby reserve that was initially dedicated to a lek of Andean Cocks-of-the-rocks, a bizarre-looking

species whose crimson males appear to have heads that are all crest. Thanks to reserves and conservation efforts, the species has recovered from endangered to vulnerable status. We were in the blind before dawn, and despite the rain that was to continue all day, the fifteen males that comprise the lek put on a noisy show of socializing and asserting dominance. We also heard a Crested Guan, and shared the blind with three Dark-backed Wood Quail, who had been taught to make morning visits for human-furnished worms. We then headed up to the reserve's lodge, and on the way were shown a pair of Yellow-breasted Antpittas, the only ones of that family that we were to see. At the lodge we enjoyed a wonderful breakfast. In addition to hummingbird feeders where we saw the gorgeous Velvet-purple Coronet, as well as Green-crowned Woodnymph, Brown Inca, and White-necked Jacobin, they also had a feeder stocked with plantains where we got close-up views of a Crimson-rumped Toucanet as well as Orange-bellied Euphonias, Golden-naped Tanagers, and Black-capped Tanagers. In the nearby bushes and trees we were treated to a Golden-headed Quetzal, Streak-capped Treehunter, Lineated Foliage-gleaners, a beautiful Streak-necked Flycatcher, and a southerly Canada Warbler.

Over the next two days we explored the reserve's large network of trails, becoming more familiar with the sights and sounds of the common birds and discovering many new ones on our own. We saw dozens of Dusky Bush Tanagers and added views of White-throated Quail-Dove, an adult Collared Forest-Falcon, Crimson-mantled Woodpecker, Pearled Treerunners, Flavescent Flycatcher, Pale-eyed Thrush, and my first long-sought-after Plushcap.

On our last day in the cloud forest, we went for a hike that took us up to 8,500 feet following an oil pipeline spanning most of eastern Ecuador. Located in the Mindo Protected Forest, the trail was both impressively constructed and recently little-used.

## BROOKS BIRD CLUB 85TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On Oct. 20-23 the Brooks Bird Club held its 85th anniversary celebration at beautiful Wilson Lodge in Oglebay Park. The Brooks Bird Club began in Oglebay by A.B. Brooks leading bird and nature walks here in 1932.

Approximately sixty members from several chapters attended, half staying at the lodge and others traveling back and forth for the week end. Carl Slater had fallen at home, so he and Juanita were only able to come for a while on Saturday evening. John and Mary Gordon weren't there as she'd recently had a heart attack but is recovering. (Cards were signed for Mary and for Ken Anderson who is celebrating his 100th birthday.)

Friday afternoon began with the board meeting, followed by the reception, and a fine dinner served in the Terrace Room.



*Bill Beatty talks at the Brooks Memorial*

Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowbirds," a delightful program enjoyed by all.

On Saturday morning, the group met at Schrader Center for a group photo and the dedication of the new children's library at Schrader, funded by the Brooks Bird Club. Books and art work were chosen by Mary Grey.

Our next event was a young man dressed as A.B. Brooks quoting a favorite poem of Brooks', "Hill Child," followed by a memorial bird walk led by Bill Beatty, through the woods to a spot A.B. often took his bird watching groups. This was about an hour and one-half walk which brought us up to lunch time.

After a very good buffet lunch, we listened to paper sessions in the Fort Henry Room, including:

Zach Fowler - Spring Ephemeral Wildflowers

Greg Park - Taxonomy of Blacksnakes in WV

LeJay Graffious - Dolly Sods: Moments Stretched From Seconds to Years.

(LeJay's program was greatly enriched by the addition of photos of his beautiful English setters in the colorful scenery of the Sods.)

Ashton Berdine - Conserving West Virginia's Special Places: the Land Trust

At 4:30 there was the President's Reception followed by a banquet. Master of Ceremonies, Jay Buckelew, invocation by Sally Egan.

Our Saturday evening program was Bird and Nature sounds, recordings by Lang Elliott, author of "Music of the Birds" and "Frogs and Toads." Elliott has driven nearly 30 thousand miles around the US recording nature sounds of day and night.

Sunday morning after breakfast was our membership meeting, then some talk and fellowship among bird club friends and promises to get together again soon (which we will do at the upcoming Eastern Shore Nov. 8-12). Thanks are due for the work of Cindy Slater and Ryan Tomazin for this enjoyable weekend.

(While no official bird list was kept, 34 species were noted on two lists – Ed.)

*Contributed by Rosie Campbell*

*Photos by Ryan Tomazin*

## LANG ELLIOTT INTERVIEW

**What is your favorite nature sound?**

Well, I must say that I my favorite singer is the Winter Wren. The male's silvery ramble always brings a smile to my face. Pure magic, as if a mountain brook is suddenly erupting in song.

**What is the most interesting place you've recorded in?**

After my recent trip to Arizona, I would say my current favorite is Aravaipa Canyon, a wonderful "oasis in the desert," located about a fifty miles to the north of Tucson. With steep canyon walls and a year-round stream bordered with trees, I experienced the ultimate refreshment of wading in cool water in the shade during the heat of the desert summer.

**You've been focusing more recently on soundscapes. What locations might we expect in the future?**

Right now I'm working hard to organize my collection of relaxation/healing soundscapes from across North America. I don't have any big trips planned for next spring, but I do hope to gather new soundscapes in south Florida and also in salt marshes from North Carolina to Virginia. Of course, it would be great to break free and travel to some new interesting place. For instance, I've never been to Costa Rica. So maybe I'll catapult myself down there for a week or two, before winter is done.

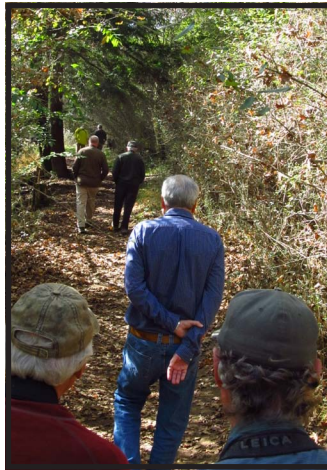
**Have you recorded in WV before?**

**What interesting sounds did you capture?**

I've done a bit of recording in West Virginia. My favorite location is the Canaan Valley area. I got some nice material there years ago down A-Frame Road. Nothing special species-wise, but it was a great mix of sound, including the gurgling of runoff from a recent rain.

**Recently, you got to spend time with the Brooks Bird Club. What did you take away from the experience?**

I had a great time during my recent visit. It was an honor presenting for one of the oldest bird clubs in North America and I was impressed by the deep love of natural history so evident among members (*I particularly enjoyed the field trip and poetry recital by Bill Beatty*). My visit got me to thinking more about focusing once again on local natural history and teaching, here among the hills and valleys of upstate NY, where I live.



*Walking the Hardwood Trail*

*Bellavista Adventure (cont. from Page 5)* One ingenious device I'd never seen before was narrow-holed chicken wire stretched over logs, which provided great traction on otherwise dangerously-slippery surfaces. There are terrific views from this trail, but the clouds closed in on us soon after our start, and we did not often get to see very far. We did see many amazing flowers, as well as a Green-fronted Lancebill, Scaly-naped Parrots, a Powerful Woodpecker, Hooded Mountain-Tanagers, and a White-crested Elaenia. We also heard a Barred Forest-Falcon and I heard a short series of calls from an Andean Pygmy-Owl. On the walk back to the lodge, we stopped at a location that was recommended for Tanager Finch, another vulnerable species and a local specialty. When Bob and Lonny moved on, I hung back and had a seat on a convenient bit of rockfall, and first listened to a very loud Spillman's Tapaculo before finally hearing a Tanager Finch sing its distinctive song in four short bursts. On my walk back to the lodge a Spillman's Tapaculo flew across the road a few feet in front of me, giving me a rare sighting of this common-but-shy bird.

The next two days we had Natalia all to ourselves. The first fell on my sixtieth birthday, and we set off for lower elevations at 5 a.m. Within seconds of leaving the lodge, a Common Potoo appeared on a post alongside the road ahead of us, and we got terrific views of this improbable-looking nightjar. After a few minutes' drive we stopped to listen to a Black-and-white Owl and witness a perfect display of the amazing Swallow-tailed Nightjar. My day was already made. Our next stop was in Mindo, a small city filled with eco-lodges. Along with a group of birdwatching schoolchildren ranging from toddler to pre-teen, we looked over a hillside that offered downward views into the nearby canopy. The beautiful Chocó Toucan was very cooperative, as well as Pale-mandibled Aracari, Golden-olive Woodpecker, Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner, Metallic-Green Tanager, and Silver-throated Tanager. We spent the next few hours walking a country lane, where we saw a Gray-headed Kite, a Bat Falcon, a Wedge-billed Hummingbird, a Rufous Motmot, Chocó and Southern Beardless-Tyrannulets, Bay Wrens, Blue-naped Tanagers, and Yellow-throated Bush Tanagers, and listened to Chestnut-mandibled Toucans, a Rufous-breasted Antthrush, and many Club-winged Manikins. We ate lunch at a restaurant in Mindo where they served me my first of two birthday cakes that day – an unexpected first for me. After lunch we took a walk and encountered a Pacific Hornero, Variable and Yellow-bellied Seedeaters, and Blue-black Grassquits. On our way back to the lodge we stopped at a backyard bird garden where we saw Green-crowned and Empress Brilliants, Spotted Woodcreepers, Swainson's and Ecuadorian Thrushes, Thick-billed Euphonias, Black-chinned Mountain-Tanagers, and Fawn-breasted Tanagers, as well as Shiny Cowbirds.

Our last day took us down to 1,000 feet at the Silanche bird reserve, where we found a deluge of new birds for our trip. We stopped several times, seeing Hook-billed Kites, a Rufous-tailed Jacamar, an Olivaceous Piculet, Masked Water Tyrants, Gray-breasted Martins, and a Buff-throated Saltator. We arrived at the viewing tower area, where we saw Black-cheeked and Lineated Woodpeckers, Guira and Golden-hooded Tanagers, Green Honeycreepers, and Yellow-tufted Dacnis. We then took a walk through the nearby woods, where we encountered a White-whiskered Hermit, Broad-billed Motmot, Orange-fronted Barbets, Cinnamon Becards, Masked Tityras, Purple-throated Woodcrows, Bananaquits, and Tawny-crested Tanagers. We arrived back at the small lot where we had parked, finding a beautiful Western White-tailed Trogon, Wedge-billed Woodcreepers, Plain and Streaked Xenops, Dot-winged Antwrens, tiny Marble-faced Bristle Tyrants, and Blue-necked Tanagers. We stopped for lunch by the Rio Silanche where we saw a swarm of swifts, including White-collared, White-chested, and Lesser Swallow-tailed. On the road back we found the tiny White-thighed Swallows along with Yellow-bellied Siskins. Our last stop was at a reserve in the Mindo conservation area where we added Green Thorntail, Buff-rumped Warbler, and Orange-billed Sparrow, and Lonny saw a Chestnut-backed Antbird.

We headed back to the Quito airport for an overnight flight home, exhausted but

brimming with memories of these birds and many others too numerous to mention. Our trip list included 232 species, and I got 174 lifers. We were glad to have gotten a taste of a wonderful country full of beauty and welcoming people.

## CORRESPONDENCE

*The Hungry Raven –*

*On August 20, 2017, I was with a group touring the western national parks, and we were in the geyser area of Yellowstone Park. It was windy and chilly, so after a visit to Excelsior Geyser Crater and being briefly warmed by the clouds of steam, I went back to the bus.*

*A raven landed in the top of a lodge pine at the far end of the parking lot. He flew towards us, hovering over a white pickup truck, then lit on the pavement right in front of us. He walked a few feet towards us, then flew onto the tailgate of the pickup, then into the bed. We saw him begin to feed on something. Then he hopped up onto the side panel with a cookie in his mouth and flew away.*

*A few minutes later, he came back, got another cookie and flew away. Two of us went to the truck to see where he got the food. We saw a canvas lunch bag with one section not fully zipped. That was all he needed. As we pulled away, he was back again, this time enjoying a sandwich.*

– Bob Rine, Wheeling, WV



*Kathy King and I had a good day birding Nov. 2. We saw 50 species excluding Canada Geese. Best bird was probably two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and seven species of sparrow including a Swamp Sparrow, and a Savannah Sparrow. The weather and scenery was spectacular big plus to the day.*

*My big birding day was at Sam Droege's new lab which is on the site of the now discontinued Whooping Crane research site. I saw 6 Whooping Cranes and was privileged to hear them "whooping" the entire time I was working at the lab!*

– Jane Whitaker, Washington, DC

## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

*It was like being at a baby shower. The little fids (feathered kids) were everywhere we looked. Our first birds of the walk were Barn Swallow fledglings sitting on a wire, still using the wing flickering technique to get their parents attention. A parent would occasionally bring by a morsel, but for the most part, these fids were on their own. Then it was a fledgling Eastern Phoebe, with a tail only half the adult size. It knew enough to sit upright, just like its parents. There were many fledgling American Robins, plus young Wood Ducks, who were adult size, but still stayed close to their parents.*

*Heather Walsh of the USGS Fish Lab (program presenter at Foray – Ed.), was our gracious host. This federal government property is not normally open to the public due to it being a research facility. It is a tiny gem of natural wetland and human created ponds, surrounded by a bursting at the seams, Jefferson County. As we walked around the perimeters of numerous man-made ponds, we found 2 Spotted Sandpipers, 2 Great Blues, 3 Green Herons and 3 Belted Kingfishers. A Bald Eagle flew over early, looking for breakfast. The natural wetland area had Swamp Milkweed in full bloom. On one plant alone, I easily found two monarch caterpillars, and we saw at least 2 or 3 adult monarchs feeding and laying eggs on milkweed. All ten of us birders were grateful we came out this morning. It was a glorious walk.*

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 8/5/17

*Bird and Butterfly Observation During Solar Eclipse - Jefferson County yard – With my eclipse ISO compliant glasses, I sat on my back deck observing the solar eclipse today. It was hot, and I had the luxury of observing the sun for a short period of time, then going back inside in air conditioning to get refreshed. I thought it was so wonderful to be able to observe the solar eclipse process. We had 81% totality in Charles Town, WV. The temperature didn't vary as much as I expected, but it was noticeable. The weather was sunny with no clouds, and unfortunately no wind, which would have been nice.*

*The cicadas were loud prior to and after totality, and were quiet during the brief period 2 minutes of 81% totality. I expected brief darkness, like maybe dusk, but we got none. The sun continued to shine, but it just wasn't as intense during totality. Most of the time during my observation, the sun looked like it had a big bite taken out of it, like "pac-man."*

*I am a butterfly rearer, and I had 2 Monarchs and 1 Black Swallowtail to release today. The Black Swallowtail was more than ready to go, so I released it about one hour before the eclipse started. I observed that it flew up and toward the sun in the usual manner. This seems to be the common pattern for butterflies I release. Always navigating by the sun it seems, and flying toward the light.*

*The 2 Monarchs I saved for releasing at totality, realizing it was 81% coverage of the sun, rather than total coverage. I was curious to see what would happen. One flew up and landed quickly in a tree nearby. This happens frequently if they are not quite ready for a full flight. The second Monarch flew up, and then it made a circle above and around me, then flew toward the sun. I don't know whether this was just a coincidence, or whether there was a brief bit of confusion on the butterflies part. I don't believe I have ever seen a butterfly I released make a complete circle around me on its very first official flight as a butterfly. I will have to pay attention to the behavior of the future butterflies I release.*

*Since it was so hot, the bird activity was minimal with only 14 different species. I hope you were able to observe the solar eclipse with proper eye protection. If not, I can vouch that it was just like what was seen on TV (except not as good as the NASA footage.) What a fine day!*

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 8/21/17

*Kathy King & I went birding today. Greenland Gap was hopping with Red-headed Woodpeckers. We saw TEN Red-heads in a locust grove, so don't cut those locust trees! They were calling, chasing & drumming. Nice to see that many in one place.*

*Kimsey Dam this morning had Osprey, Merlin, a family of Common Yellowthroats, and four kingfishers. Four Red-head Woodpeckers in a tree with a Bald Eagle were NOT at Kimsey, but at the bridge before Kimsey. It's been a long time since I have seen RHWP near Kimsey. The starlings have chased them away from the dead trees at the dam.*

– Diane Holsinger, Timberville, VA, 8/24/17

*While driving home from dinner this evening around dusk, Emilie noticed a number of Chimney Swifts circling near the power plant on Beechurst Ave. We pulled over into the Seneca Center parking lot and observed several hundred swifts gathering in the area. At around 7:30 they began entering a chimney in a building at the corner of Beechurst and 7th St, on the opposite side of Beechurst from the Seneca Center (where several thousand swifts were observed roosting a couple of years ago). By about 7:45 they had all entered the chimney to roost.*

– Bill & Emilie Johnson, Morgantown, WV, 9/20/17

*I had my first ever for the yard Mourning Warbler in the thicket of overgrowth behind our stream and pond today about 3:45 this afternoon. It was a beautiful adult male, and although it did not stay very long, at least after the time I first saw it, I did get some great views. The blue-grey head, yellow underparts and olive upperparts were quite evident, as was the dark breast patch and absence of an eyering. It was stunning and I couldn't have been more excited. It moved around near the stream and then off into the nearby trees where I lost sight of it and did not see it again after that.*



Northern Harrier – photo by Wade Snyder



## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

*This was a case of being in the right place at the right time. I had been in another part of the house and had just gone to the kitchen to put something in the sink when I looked out the window at the pond, and caught sight of this wonderful bird. What a joyful surprise! I love migration time.*

– Carol Del-Colle, Summit Point, WV, 9/20/17

*Saturday evening: Toddler son asks (demands) to take an evening walk to Mark Trail's house with the blanket. He wants to watch the chimney swifts (He remembers what the birds are called.). So we go. We notice immediately the swifts swirling above our own house. Down at Mark's there are more, and many more than the last time we watched (Sept. 10). It is exciting, but even while the numerous swifts circle and swoop, none are seen entering Mark Trail's chimney as the sunlight dims. We move the blanket. The swifts have chosen a different chimney, the one next door at the Methodist Church. It is high and fairly thin, and we already see many swifts dropping into it. At any point in our observation, there appear to be 200 swifts swirling in circles in the local sky, but all the while many are dropping down to roost. The crowd continues to draw from the neighborhood. I would estimate anywhere from between 600-1000 Chimney Swifts descended that night into the thin, tall chimney at 1215 Washington Street, Bolivar.*

– Deb Hale, Harpers Ferry, WV, 9/25/17

*This morning while on a trail in the woods at Cranesville Swamp I couldn't believe I heard the guttural bugling call of a Sandhill Crane flying south overhead out of sight.*

*About an hour later I made it out onto the boardwalk where I heard an abbreviated croak. Upon turning around 2 Sandhill Cranes flew right overhead heading NORTH. They were only in sight for less than 10 seconds before disappearing behind the trees.*

*About an hour later after I got back to my car I drove nearby Feather and Cranesville Roads searching farm fields but I could not find them. Since the swamp is on the border of Maryland they could have landed in that state.*

*Only 18 species at the swamp. Highlights included Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cape May Warblers, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Swainson's Thrush and Swamp Sparrow.*

– Terry Bronson, Morgantown, WV 9/27/17

*This morning, I was changing oil in my driveway this morning and heard my neighbors chicken start screaming. The screaming got closer to me and I crawled out from under the truck and was watching the yard and garden, expecting to see a dog or coyote running with a chicken. It was getting closer & closer and I couldn't see anything. Now, about 30 yards and I looked up as the Goshawk & Chicken came over my garage! It flew overhead maybe 10 feet high and landed in a strip of spruce trees about a hundred yards away (the chicken had quit screaming by then). I ran inside to get my camera. It had relocated by the time I got over there. I couldn't find it again. That chicken (a small bantam, maybe grouse-sized and grouse-colored) spent the summer pecking holes in my tomatoes!*

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 10/17/17

*Molly Check, director of the Schrader Environmental Education Center, invited Brooks Bird Club HQ Chapter members to organize a Big Sit at the Center today as part of Oglebay's Octoberfest. Ten people took part. We counted twenty species of birds. The weather was mostly cloudy and cool in the morning and warmer with plentiful sunshine in the afternoon.*

*Our spot for the Big Sit was the second story balcony on the back (west side) of the Schrader Center. We thank Schrader staff for comfortable chairs, a box of binoculars to loan out to people who stopped by, and a table with bird identification guide books and informative pamphlets. The Park was jammed with people, and many stopped by to see what we were doing.*

– Jay Buckelew, Bethany, WV, 10/7/17

*We had a beautiful day for the Big Sit. The winds were calm in the morning and the sun shining on the lake was gorgeous. It was a busy morning for birds. Then it slowed down until later in the day when it picked back up. We "Dam Sitters" sat from 7:00 AM until 6:00 PM. We found 49 species for the day, including 3 late species of warblers. There were a couple of "What is that?" that we couldn't see from the circle. We had several hundreds of Chimney Swifts fly over throughout the day. They flew way up high over the lake, and then they came down low over the water and were taking insects, and even seemed to be sipping from the lake. The 40 Wood Ducks scattered over the lake, were indeed the most beautiful image of the day. We had curious visitors who lived close by, check us and our painted circle out. They had loads of questions for us to determine what we were up to. They were surprised when we told them birdwatchers; they thought we were Wiccans. Always something interesting on a day of birding. We couldn't have asked for a more beautiful day!*

– Mindy Waldron, Surveyor, WV, 10/8/17

*The 4+ inches of snow overnight has brought out the birds! On our walk, a Common Raven appeared to be having fun kiting on the wind high above the snowy earth. Flocks of little birds flew overhead. On our driveway a flock of 10 Chipping Sparrows along with our first Dark-eyed Junco searched for food.*

*At our feeders we now have four Pine Siskins. Along with them I have seen Song, Chipping and Field Sparrows. The latter was the first at our feeders. There are both House and Purple Finches. Dark-eyed Juncos are cleaning up things on the ground along with the other sparrows. Of course, Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice are always present. A male Hairy Woodpecker and a Blue Jay just arrived as I finish typing this.*

*It should be an exciting day at the feeders. Everything is coated with snow. It is quite windy. The power has been flicking on and off but mostly has stayed on.*

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 10/30/17

– **Sightings taken from  
WVBird ListServ**

## CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

### NEW MEMBERS

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### EXCHANGE CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Minnesota Ornithologists Union  
C/O Carpenter Nature Center  
12805 St. Croix Trail South  
Hastings, MN 55033

## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

### BIBBEE CHAPTER

*Contact Jim for information at jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com*

**Jan. 6, 2018** – 10 AM-2 PM. Winter Eagle Survey. Meet at Hinton DQ for tally afterwards. You can join a group to look for eagles wintering in our area. Locations along Bluestone Lake, New River and Greenbrier River. Contact Jim Phillips.

**Feb. 16-19, 2018** – Great Backyard Bird Count weekend. Tally birds for the GBBC and enter the data online at Birdcount.org

**Mar. 3, 2018** –10 AM -2 PM. Winter Eagle Survey. Meet at Hinton DQ for tally afterwards. You can join a group to look for eagles wintering in our area. Locations along Bluestone Lake, New River and Greenbrier River. Contact Jim Phillips.

### HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

**Dec. 19, 2017** – Christmas Party. Meet at the Schrader Center at Oglebay, 6 PM. Potluck dinner at 6:30, with a quiz and gift exchange afterwards.

### MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

*Jan. – Pat Collins 304-375-2309*

**Jan. 4, 2018** – Ohio River Eagle Watch, 8:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

**Jan. 11, 2018** – Program, 6:30pm. Vienna Public Library, bring finger food.

**Jan. 18, 2018** – Duck Route, Muskingum River, 8:00am. Meet at Big Sandy Superstore or 8:30 at Rinky Dink's in Marietta, bring lunch.

**Jan. 25, 2018** – "The Wilds", Ohio, all-day trip, 9:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

**Jan. 31- Feb 2, 2018** – Killdeer Plains, Ohio - overnight. Details TBA.

*Feb. – Gene Hilton 304-428-8641*

**Feb. 8, 2018** – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, NW Pipe Dr.

**Feb. 15, 2018** – Middle Island area, 8:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

**Feb. 22, 2018** – Ohio River, Little Hocking Area, 9:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7; bring lunch.

*Mar. – Shirley Radcliffe 304-428-8520*

**Mar. 1 - 2, 2018** – Funk / Killbuck, Ohio - overnight. Details TBA.

**Mar. 8, 2018** – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, NW Dr.

**Mar. 15, 2018** – Seneca Lake, Ohio, 8:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, WV, bring lunch.



## NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

### POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

**Jan. 9, 2018** – Winter Bird Walk & Driving Tour, 7:30 AM-11:30 AM, Various Birding Spots around Charles Town area. Meeting spot at Martin's Grocery Store in Charles Town then carpooling to various locations around the Eastern Panhandle. Visit sites such as the ponds on Country Club Road, Potomac Street, several stops along the Shenandoah River and more (snow date of January 23).

### OGLEBAY SCHRADER CENTER

**Jan. 27, 2018** – Winter Ecology for Kids, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm. Schrader Environmental Education Center, Oglebay Resort, Wheeling, WV.

### WV STATE PARKS

**Jan. 1, 2018** – First Day Hikes in WV State Parks:

**Blackwater Falls S.P.** - Contact blackwaterfallssp@wv.gov for full details.

**Pipestem Resort S.P.** – McKeever Lodge lobby at 1 p.m.

**Beech Fork S.P.** – Contact 304-528-5794 for full details.

**Tygart Lake S.P.** – Tygart Lake State Park Nature Center at 1 p.m.

**Kanawha State Forest** – Meet at 1 p.m. at the nature center parking lot. Call 304-558-3500 for details.

# BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

## MARCH 9-11, 2018

### NORTH BEND STATE PARK

The Early Spring 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 3:00 pm on Friday with dinner at 6:30 pm. Departure will be on Sunday after the annual membership meeting. Speakers for the weekend will include author and ornithologist Scott Weidensaul, and photographer and traveler Jeffrey Hall.

The annual membership meeting will be Sunday morning.

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.

This year, lunch on Sunday is not included since, in the past, many left before lunch. The price for the weekend has been reduced accordingly. You may have lunch at the dining room on Sunday but you will have to pay for it separately.

**Deadline for reservations is January 31, 2018**

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 \$135.00 EACH..... \$\_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PERSON SHARING ROOM \_\_\_\_\_

(Roommate will be assigned if no preference is given.)

SINGLE ROOM \$205.00 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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**Three woodland nymphs**

*– Patty Arrington, (photo by)  
Rosie Campbell and Janice  
Emrick at the 85th*

*Story on page 6*

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