



# THE MAIL BAG

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RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

## Editor's Note

For the second year in a row, we're not having Foray in the interest of making sure that everything is back to being normal and safe. With another June to twiddle our thumbs and spend more time around home turfs, you hopefully can get outside and enjoy all that nature has to offer. And then, write something nice for the Mail Bag or Redstart to share with the group. Or if you're traveling (as Mr. and Mrs. Ed. will be), you can write a travelogue for publishing here, with the hopeful focus on nature activities. As us editors know, many people enjoy good content in the BBC publications, and so much of that comes from you!



A new milestone in West Virginia ornithology has finally been published: The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in West Virginia, edited by state ornithologist Rich Bailey and Casey Rucker, Redstart editor. The superlatives would fill this page, but suffice to say, every West Virginia birder should own this book. In its 554 pages, the breeding bird species, the habitats, and large amounts of data are displayed in full color in easy-to-digest means. Kudos go out to all that participated in the years of data collection and writing, and especially to Rich and Casey, who dedicated years of their lives to producing this volume for the good of the birds of West Virginia. See the order form in this issue, and support Penn State Press by purchasing it from their website. BBC members are privy to a special members-only discount on a limited number of reserved books. Get your copy now!



From time to time, I've been collecting interviews from speakers at our events and special guests at Foray. In this issue, Dawn Hewitt, editor of Bird Watcher's Digest, provided us with a great interview. If you have suggestions for more interesting interviews, please contact the editor.

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, CINDY SLATER

April is a promise. May is fulfillment. May is a time when everything is happening, when life rises to a peak. May is the bird song month. - Edwin Way Teal, *A Walk Through The Year*

May certainly is a happening month. Just getting back from the Wildflower Pilgrimage where I witnessed the beginning migration of birds. Making mental notes of the birds I have not yet had the pleasure of hearing. The joy, happiness and excitement when hearing a new bird song for the year is very similar to the warm feeling you get inside when finally scheduling a long overdue visit with a friend.

Speaking of scheduling long overdue visits, do not forget to put October 22, 23, and 24 on your calendar for the fall Bird Club meeting this year at the newly renovated North Bend State Park. Some other exciting news is the 2nd West Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas is available to purchase now! If you need assistance with ordering let me know and I will be happy to point you in the right direction.

I will leave you with this final thought; next year the Brooks Bird Club will be 90 years old. Where would you like to celebrate the wonderful event? I would love to hear from you and know your thoughts. Send me a note, jot a quick text, or give me a call. Enjoy the Spring!

– Your BBC President, Cindy Slater



*Life's been crazy; here's a baby Killdeer!*  
- Photo by member Hannah Clipp,  
borrowed from the BBC Facebook page

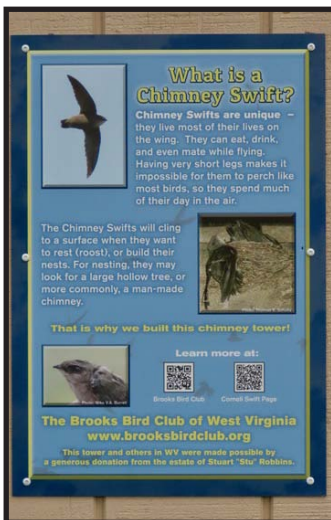
# BBC CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER UPDATES

Chimney Swift towers have been erected in four locations in West Virginia, with more towers being discussed. We've received some photos of the progress of the Bibbee and Handlan chapters' locations.



*Jim Triplett did an excellent job installing the signage on Hayden Lester's Chimney Swift tower at the Marmet Locks and Dam. Thanks to the Brooks Bird Club for all they did!*

– Rick Gregg, Handlan Chapter, tower & signage photographer



*Here is a photo of the Chimney Swift tower at Little Beaver complete with signage.*

– Mindy Waldron, Bibbee Chapter

# 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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# CORRESPONDENCE

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

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

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

For those of you who prefer email, correspondences may be sent to: jslater1120@yahoo.com

*(Continued on Page 7)*

## 2021 WV BIG DAY RESULTS

*On Sunday, April 25th, we did a Big Day in Cabell, Mason and Wayne Cos. WV. The early date was necessary as Derrick will be unavailable during the month of May. There was an expected shortage of migrants, which will presumably be arriving soon. We hoped for good numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds but only the former materialized. We had an excellent sparrow day. The total of species observed was 90.*

– John Hubbard & Derrick Kolling, Huntington, WV

*Matt Orsie, Derek Courtney, Gary Rankin and I participated in a Big Day on May 15, starting out in the Ohio River valley and ending up in the mountains visiting Cabell, Mason, Nicholas and Pocahontas County. The temperature ranged from 39 to 72 degrees.. We started out at 3:30 am and ended at 9:30 pm, covering 405 auto miles. We were able to find 147 species which was tied for fourth all time in West Virginia and our last species observed was a Northern Saw-whet Owl on the Scenic Highway at the Williams River Overlook. We observed 30 warblers, 7 shorebirds, 4 owls and 6 ducks, including seeing a breeding Hooded Merganser with young in Pocahontas County. We added 6 new species to our Big Day list including Least Bittern, Great Horned Owl, Nashville Warbler, Common Loon, Mississippi Kite and Dickcissel. We missed out on gulls, Black-and-white Warbler, Least Flycatcher, Hairy Woodpecker and accipiters.*

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

*For Global Big Day on May 8, I did a big day in Raleigh County, WV. The weather was quite nice, with high temps in the high 50s/low 60s with clear skies and some wind. I focused primarily on a few hotspots near Beckley. I set a personal goal of 100 species and ended my day with 107, including 23 species of warblers. My first bird of the day was an American Robin and my last bird was a Barred Owl. A few personal highlights include Greater Yellowlegs, Ring-necked Duck, Savannah Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Nashville Warbler, and Least Flycatcher. Some personal misses include Cedar Waxwing, Acadian Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Great Blue Heron, and Swamp Sparrow.*

– Steven Wilson, Beckley, WV

*In spite of the rain, I went birding for this Global Big Day. I started at Murphy's farm and ended up going to 10 different locations with 10 Ebird lists. The total taxa ended up at 99! Although I saw the Peregrine at Harpers Ferry, I missed the Osprey! Happy Birding!*

– Bill Telfair

*On May 8, the Bibbee Nature Club did our 50th Century Day Bird Count in the Pipestem Area. Six participants found a total of 91 species. Six raptor species (Osprey, Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk), five vireo species (White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo), five swallow species (Purple Martin, Tree Swallow, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow), and thirteen warbler species (Ovenbird, Worm-eating Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-poll Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler) were found.*

– Mindy Waldron, Surveyor, WV



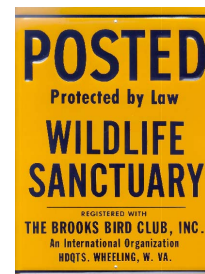
*Eastern panhandle Bobolink flock – photo by N. Wade Snyder*

## REQUEST FOR INFO ON CHIMNEY SWIFT MIGRATORY ROOSTS IN WEST VIRGINIA

I'm writing with my WV Division of Natural Resources cap on. We're looking for the locations of buildings whose chimneys have been observed to host numbers of Chimney Swifts in late August and September, in order to maintain access for these declining birds just for those days when they need them.

I'm aware that two areas in Morgantown have hosted numbers of Chimney Swifts - WVU campus and Seneca Center - but do not know the exact buildings where the swifts have been observed. In addition, swifts have been observed in numbers in Fairmont, but information on the building where they roost would be most appreciated. I'm also curious to know if any Chimney Swift towers built in recent years in West Virginia have hosted migrants.

If you know of any locations where dozens or more of Chimney Swifts assemble during migration, please let me know! Many thanks in advance,  
– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV



## BBC SANCTUARY SIGN “MANAGER” FOUND

I would like to send a big shout-out THANK YOU to Mr Matt Fox. Matt has volunteered to take over doing the Sanctuary Signs for the Bird Club.

Cindy Ellis, I would also like to give you a big shout-out THANK YOU for all the years you have handled doing the Sanctuary Signs.

The most sincere thanks to the both of you.

– Cindy Slater, BBC President

## INTERVIEW WITH DAWN HEWITT, EDITOR, *BIRD WATCHER'S DIGEST* AND *WATCHING BACKYARD BIRDS*



**What is your birding story (i.e., what got you into birding)?** When I was a junior in college, majoring in nature interpretation in the School of Agriculture and Forestry at West Virginia University, Lab Ornithology was a required course. The class was interesting and enlightening, but for extra credit, we could attend Saturday morning outings with the local bird club—outings led by my major professor, Bill Wiley, whom I adored. I

loved those outings, although I don't remember whether they were held by Mountaineer Audubon Society or Brooks Bird Club. I just remember that they were usually at the Core Arboretum. If I recall correctly from 40+ years ago, we didn't have to attend every outing during the semester, but I did because they were so much fun! The first bird on my life list, scratched onto the pages of my Golden Guide to Birds of North America (one of the texts for the class), next to red-bellied woodpecker, was "Nova Campground, Daytona, Florida, 2/21/79," spotted while I was on spring break! It was the first bird I ever saw and identified all by myself. My spark bird, however, took place after the semester ended. I was sitting on the deck at my cousins' house a few blocks from my family home in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. My cousin Beth, who was two years younger than I, but who had been enjoying birds long before I did, pointed to the meadow of a vacant lot next door and said, "Look! A flock of grackles!" WHAT?!? Grackles in our neighborhood? Birds I've never seen (or, at least, never recognized) before, birds whose image I knew only from a field guide, right here? How could it be? That is when I realized that birding doesn't require going to an exotic place, or to an arboretum, but can be enjoyed anywhere, including in one's own backyard. My mind was blown! Since then, since the spring of 1979, I've been a serious—but not hardcore—birder, but very grassroots. I didn't know about the American Birding Association, or the existence of bird tours until well into the 1990s. In 1982, I moved to Bloomington, Indiana, for grad school, and joined the local bird club there, Sassafras Audubon Society. Before long, I was president! In 2000, I took a job as a copy editor at the Bloomington newspaper, The Herald-Times. I lobbied to write a weekly birding column, and got a positive response. Readers, it seemed, loved my column because so many people enjoy birds. I became a minor local celebrity in the same town as Bobby Knight and John Mellencamp!

**How did you land at BWD?** I didn't subscribe to, or even know about Bird Watcher's Digest until 2007, when Project FeederWatch offered me a great deal on a subscription. I was hooked, of course. By 2013, things were going downhill at The Herald-Times, as they are at newspapers across the country: outsourcing, layoffs, morale problems. A friend of mine in Bloomington, Andi, was a big fan of Boston Terriers, and followed Chet Baker (Julie Zickefoose's late dog) and Julie on Facebook. I didn't, nor did I follow Bill Thompson, III, nor Bird Watcher's Digest. But Julie cross-posted BT3's post: "Bird Watcher's Digest is seeking someone who knows about birds and publishing to be managing editor." Andi forwarded it to me, saying "Dawn, I think Bird Watcher's Digest is looking for you." What? I had lived in Bloomington for 31 years. I loved Bloomington. Could I consider leaving? I contacted BT3 and told him that I did know birds and publishing, and eventually we had what was supposed to be a 20-minute phone interview. It lasted nearly an hour and a half. Chatting with him was like talking to a long-lost best friend. We set a time for me to drive 6 hours to Marietta for an in-person interview. The interview went really well, and he offered me the job. If I moved to Marietta, I'd be six hours closer to my 90-year-old mother, who was dying of cancer. I'd be getting paid to think about and promote birds, and encourage birding, and bird

conservation. How could I decline? So, I left my beloved home of 31 years and all my friends, and moved to a place where I knew no one other than the BWD staff whom I had met briefly, once. It was the best move of my life.

**You are part of a successful podcast. Can you explain how that came to be and what about it might interest BBC members?** Sometime in the mid-2000s, BT3 launched a podcast, This Birding Life (which remains available at <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/podcasts.php>), in which he interviewed interesting birders, conservationists, authors, researchers, etc. Out There with the Birds started out as a multi-author blog, but in 2016, Bill and Ben Lizdas—who joined the BWD staff as advertising sales and events coordinator when Eagle Optics shuttered—decided to create a blog of the same name, in which the two pals would chat about all things birdy (and other things that gave them joy, such as music). In late 2019, when Bill was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer, almost at the same time Ben announced his departure from BWD to work for Swarovski Optik, the fate of the podcast was unclear. It had several different hosts while all of us at BWD were trying to figure out how keep the company together—under the brave and bold leadership of president and publisher Wendy Clark, Bill's partner. It took a while, but ultimately, we agreed that Wendy and I, along with our new ad sales director, Kelly Ball, would co-host the OTWTB podcast, but using a formula like BT3's This Birding Life podcast, now archived: We'd interview fascinating people doing interesting things in the world of birds and birding. Kelly, Wendy, and I are each about a decade apart in age, and have different perspectives and interests. Kelly and Wendy have scored interviews with younger and more diverse birders! I'm working my way through interviewing all of Bird Watcher's Digest columnists. I love working with these people, and it's an honor and a thrill to be the first person to read their columns when they submit them for each issue! But interview-



ing them is extra rewarding—I feel like I get to know them personally. I mean, Julie Zickefoose is my dear friend, and I’ve birded with Mark Garland and Scott Weidensaul (both of whom were, wow, amazing guides), but Alvaro Jaramillo and Pete Dunne—I’ve met them both a couple of times, but I really don’t know them, other than from their columns. And I’ve never laid eyes on Al Batt or David Bird or Paul Baicich. But when I interviewed them via Zoom, I felt like we became friends. I hope those who listen to the podcast feel that way, too, because these are some of the best birders in the world, and they’re all sweet, fun, funny, kind people. Befriending them makes their columns feel more personal. I have plans to interview Mark Garland soon, and then Julie Zickefoose, David Lindo, Katie Fallon, and Bryony Angel—although they don’t know it yet! I can’t wait. And then...when I’ve gone through all the BWD columnists, I have a few other people in mind. For example, a friend of mine in Indiana is the mother of two little girls. She also works for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and climbs into peregrine falcon nests to band the chicks. In her spare time, she goes birding! I hope to interview her later this year. Chatting with people whose lives are even more in touch with birds than my own—it’s inspiring and joyful.

**It’s been two years since BT3 and Elsa passed. How has the BWD family**

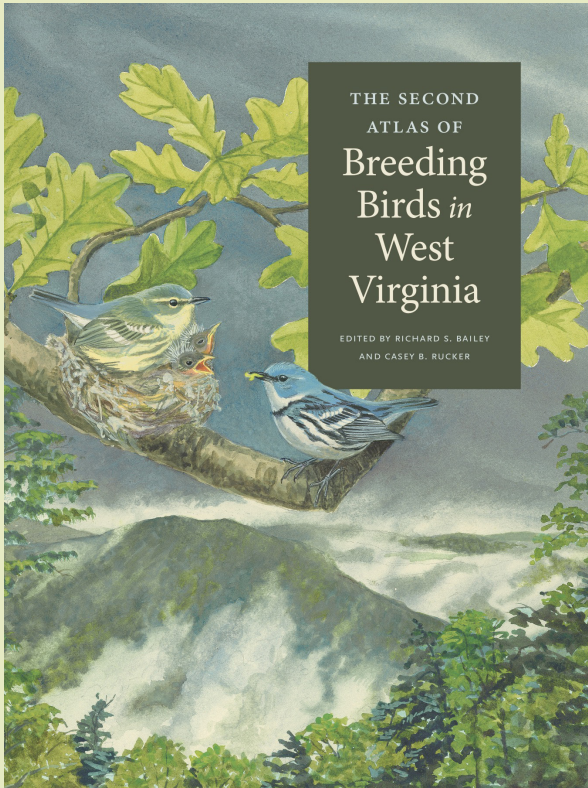
**forwarded their legacy?** BT3 died in late March 2019, and Elsa died two months later. We didn’t know if the company could survive, especially since print media is struggling universally, and has been for more than a decade. But the fundamentals of this company are strong, and we, the staff, are not only upholding them, but strengthening them, and developing them. Before he died, BT3 established several other components of the company: Reader Rendezvous birding tours, in which our friends and fans can go birding with us—both domestic and international birding tours.

We hire the best local guides, whether in Cleveland or Texas or Colorado or Costa Rica or Ecuador or South Africa. We had to put the Rendezvous on hold for 2020 because of COVID, but we’ve resumed, with smaller groups, and lots of health-safety precautions in place. (Please visit [ReaderRendezvous.com](http://ReaderRendezvous.com).) Also, in 2018, BT3 and Ben started RedstartBirding.com—aiming to fill the niche Eagle Optics vacated (Ben had been the store manager for that company). And Redstart is doing great! We usually beat our monthly sales goals, because we’re birders, selling the best optics for birding. We know (and use) the optics, and we know birding. Cabela’s, Amazon—they don’t know about optics for birding. And, of course, the magazines, Bird Watcher’s Digest and Watching Backyard Birds. I was managing editor of both publications for six years before BT3 died. I know how to assemble those magazines, and they’ve changed very little from the successful formula I inherited. I think BT3 and Elsa would be pleased and honored that we’re still hanging in there. Elsa might disapprove of some of the more “artsy” cover art we’ve chosen in the past year, but we received voluminous praise for the November/December 2020 issue, with its almost shockingly colorful yellow-billed magpie cover art by Christina Ball. So, this 12-person, woman-owned company is hanging in there through these challenging times, determined to succeed as

a business, and to help promote birds and birding by just doing our jobs.

**What are your plans for birding this year?** Oh boy! I’ve already gotten out so much more this year than I did last year. My “patch” is Oak Grove Cemetery here in Marietta. I bird it several times a week, and this morning, I had a great look at a cerulean warbler!! This is just two blocks from my house! We just finished a Reader Rendezvous here in Marietta—our first one focused on bird photography, mentored by our production director Bruce Wunderlich, who is a master at “birdtography.” By all accounts, the event was a raging success, sold out with six attendees who went home very happy and satisfied. I got to participate in that by helping to find the birds (by sight and sound). Bruce and I will be doing it again the Smoky Mountains in early June (again, sold out at six). In October, I get to assist with the Hawk Mountain Reader Rendezvous (also sold out), in which Scott Weidensaul will be the local guide! There are several other Reader Rendezvous planned, and several to be announced soon, but those are the only two I’ll get to work (unless something changes). If the border opens, I’m hoping to take a non-work trip to southern Ontario in late August. I’m not expecting great birding then, but you bet I’ll be trying to add to my Canada list in eBird! Otherwise, no international trips planned—yet, but one can always hope. I’m fully vaccinated, so I’m ready to go (but happy to continue masking and social distancing for the sake and safety of those around me). In a few days, I’ll be moving (just two blocks down the street—even closer to my patch!) so I’ll get to start a new yard list, and my new yard has better habitat than my current one! I’m excited about that, too. People often comment on my enthusiasm for birds and birding, but ... how can I not be excited about something that is such a source of joy in my life?





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## FIRST WV BIRDS ON JANUARY 1, 2021

*My FOY bird(s) were Brown Creeper, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, and Tufted Titmouse.*

– Wil Hershberger, Hedgesville, WV

*Northern Cardinal and Downy Woodpecker were the first birds I saw this morning.*

– Wilma Jarrell, Wileyville, WV

*Freezing rain has started here but a quick 20-minute trip up the road to the Millcreek Intermediate School's nature trail gave me the opportunity to start the year out right. American Crow was my first bird. White-throated Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and American Robins were also present.*

– Roy Boyle, Berkeley County, WV

*My FOY bird was a Red-bellied Woodpecker.*

– Nancy Moran, Raleigh County, WV

*First birds were Mourning Dove and junco.*

– Marcia Anderson, Putnam County, WV

*Happy New Year, birders! My first birds found on a feeder were two Tufted Titmice. That was followed later by a female Hairy Woodpecker and a Brown Creeper (two I don't see everyday)! Off to a good start! Happy Birding!*

– Lynne Wiseman Harpers Ferry, WV

*My first birds were a Tufted Titmouse and a male cardinal.*

– Wendy Perrone, Hinton, WV

*My first bird of 2021 was the Pine Siskin. We have been graced with their presence since November, and a nice little flock of about 20 siskins were feeding on the back porch deck. They can't get enough shelled sunflower seeds, and my husband can't feed them enough. The siskins were accompanied by some stunning Eastern Bluebirds, who seem to get along just fine with the siskins on the porch and on the same swinging feeder tray.*

*My husband's first bird of 2021 was the Eastern Screech-owl. Hubby was up at "dark thirty" with his night vision scope, trying to spot the owl while its head can be seen in its nest box hole. Not only did he find our usual tenant, Screechie, in the middle box, but there was a second owl in the south box. This is only the 3rd time this winter the second owl has been seen in one of our nest boxes. All of the sightings of the second owl seem to be when the weather is not so great. So it's no dummy, and knows where to find a warm dry bed. This all happened while his "night owl" wife was still sleeping soundly.*

*Happy New Year, thank goodness!*

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV

*Good Birding & Happy New Year! First bird was American Crow.*

– Diane Holsinger, Timberville, VA

*Since it was still dark this morning the first birds I could identify were White-throated Sparrows and a Song Sparrow with them. I could have made it the Carolina Wren that I know sleeps in the Williamsburg bird bottle by the front door but that was too easy.*

*As soon as it got light I was treated to the juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and a Brown Creeper.*

– Bruni Haydl, Charles Town, WV

*My first bird of the year was a Purple Finch. Technically, it was on the feeder at the same time with some starlings and other birds when I first saw the feeder, but I'm counting the Purple Finch first.*

– "Alex"

*My first were 3 House Finches at my feeder. Soon joined by a Carolina Wren, 2 cardinals, 2 White-throats and a House Sparrow. A starling was not long after.*

– Bill Telfair, Jefferson County, WV

*My first walk of 2021 was Friday at the nursery bottom in Parsons. I had a Common Raven, an American Kestrel, and a Coopers Hawk. Just the three birds in an hour. (But four, if you count the chicken the Cooper's Hawk was eating.)*

– Mimi Kibler, Parsons, WV

*Barred Owl.*

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

*Our first bird was the Northern Cardinal, but we had 16 additional species after that.*

– Elliot Kirschbaum, Jefferson, WV

## BBC CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER UPDATES

*(Continued from Page 2)*



*Headquarters Chapter swift tower with signage installed at Oglebay Park in Wheeling.*

– Molly Check, Director,  
Oglebay Schrader Center

## INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

First off, I want to thank everyone for their condolences about Amy (Rennie's wife Amy unexpectedly passed earlier this year - Ed.). She really liked people, but fellow birders were at the top of her list. My mom told me to get out of the house Sunday, so that is what I did.

I went up Rt. 2 through Cabell and Mason counties, not expecting much in the way of birds, especially ducks, but boy was I wrong. And with the help of Gary Rankin, who I ran into at the gravel pit in Gallipolis Ferry, I ended up with 16 total species of ducks, 2 types of geese (Canada and Greater White-fronted geese), two swans (Trumpeter and Mute), and a pair of Horned Grebes.

Highlights were: Tundra Swan (2 in a flooded farm field near Gallipolis Ferry and 11 in a flooded farm field off of Route 817); Greater White-fronted Goose (3 at Greenbottom); Black Vultures (10 with 8 sitting on a deer carcass just about R&L Carriers before you get to Point Pleasant, and 2 as sentinels at the back of the field)

And I was heading back home, in a field right across from May Moore Mound, I saw a pair of large birds sitting there. Naturally I had to turn around to get a better look at them.

It turns out that it was a pair of immature Bald Eagles, and as I was sitting there a third immature flew in to sit a few feet away from the other two. I then noticed a shadow pass over the field and I looked up, and it was a pair of adult Bald Eagles flying in circles above the field. I don't know if I have ever had a five eagle day, let alone five eagles in one place. Amy would have gone crazy.

– Rennie Talbert, Barboursville, WV, 3/7/2021

I saw and photographed my first Louisiana Waterthrush of the year yesterday (3/23) at Blackwater Falls State Park. It was along the fast-flowing Pendleton Run just above Pendleton Falls. I think this is the earliest I've ever seen one in the state, although I sometimes used to get them in Morgantown before April 1st.

– John Boback, Ford City, PA, 3/24/2021

Evening Grosbeaks, which have been at our house daily since November 1st, have been increasing in numbers over past week or so, presumably as birds that wintered farther south are moving north. I counted 42 this morning and probably missed a few, the most since January. Quite a racket outside.

– Rodney Bartgis, Valley Bend, Randolph County, WV, 4/4/2021

Winter birding at the Mill Creek ponds in Randolph County was quite productive this year, but like clockwork the number and diversity of water birds dropped the first of spring. I normally don't think of the mountain counties as being potentially good for water birds, but that is just an old bias that's hard to shake. The physical management of the ponds is going to change dramatically this coming year to meet water treatment requirements, so they may not (or may?) be as much of a bird draw in the future.

Here is the water bird list for Jan-March 19, 2021, with daily maximum number observed: Snow Goose (2), Ross's Goose (2), Greater White-fronted Goose (5), Cackling Goose (1), Canada Goose (486), Tundra Swan (5), Blue-winged Teal (7), Northern Shoveler (5), Gadwall (2), American Wigeon (1), Mallard (21), American Black Duck (3), Northern Pintail (3), Green-winged Teal (2), Canvasback (180), Redhead (32), Ring-necked Duck (4), Greater Scaup (20), Lesser Scaup (104), Long-tailed Duck (8), Bufflehead (31), Common Goldeneye (1), Red-breasted Merganser (3), Ruddy Duck (31), Horned Grebe (1), Bonaparte's Gull (2), Ring-billed Gull (68), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1).

Of the 28 species, Lesser Black-backed Gull was the biggest surprise to me, although it was certainly nice to see Cackling Goose and Ross's Goose at the same time.

Rodney Bartgis, Valley Bend, Randolph County, WV, 4/9/2021

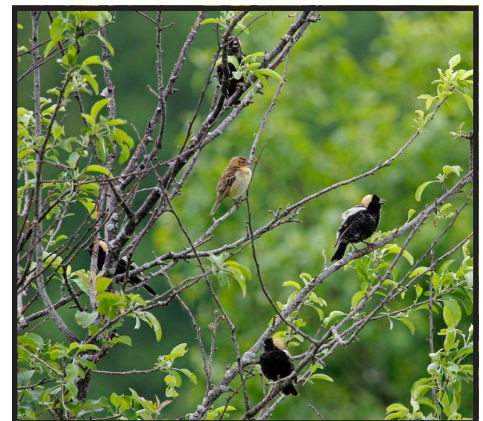
Yesterday at 5:00 PM my husband and I went to Oglebay Park to see if the Merlins were back...and indeed, they are. We parked at Caddy Camp and walked up to the ridge between Crispin Golf course 17 fairway and 12 fairway...all was quiet until we returned to Caddy Camp...we sat for a moment on a picnic bench (it was a beautiful evening) and that is when we heard them and within moments they were in the air over our heads, enchanting us with their soaring...so exciting! Assuming male and female but could not discern the size differential. And then within 5 minutes one of them flew lower and closer and I could see that he/she had something in its talons (very black, small..maybe a mole?). He landed in a dead Ash tree close to 12 green and began eating. The other Merlin landed in a conifer one tree from where we stood on the patio. That bird also was eating! What a fabulous birding experience.

– Debby Koegler, Wheeling WV, 4/15/2021



Injured Sora.

– photo provided by Tom Pauley



Part of a Bobolink flock.

– photo by N. Wade Snyder



**INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)**

Dr. Tom Pauley, a (BBC member and) retired professor at Marshall University sent along this posting and photo from one of his students (page 8, top right). A Red-tailed Hawk was attacking this bird in his yard and he wanted to know the name of the bird. Turns out, it was a Sora.

– Jim Triplett, Charleston, WV, 4/21/21

I had a great time today observing a male Bobolink feeding on dandelion seeds at the USDA Research site in Bardane. It appeared that his focus was on developing seed heads as opposed to the fully opened heads. He would search and break into an enclosed cluster and feed on developing seeds. I am ever amazed at the resourcefulness and opportunistic levels of birds!

– N. Wade Snyder, Shenandoah Junction, WV, 4/30/21

Hi all, belated post due to being busy: on April 19 and 20 we trapped and banded 5 Loggerhead Shrikes at 4 sites in Greenbrier and Monroe counties. Poor weather prevented us from hitting as many sites as we hoped we would. Nonetheless, the picture was a little bit improved from 2019-2020 which were both grim years in terms of numbers...

– Rich Bailey, Elkins, WV, 5/3/21

Today's weather front evidently helped with a huge gathering of Bobolinks. My observations were at the USDA Fruit Research Station in Bardane. I estimated a total of 75, but that likely is a very conservative number. There was no mistaking where the Bobolinks were based on their constant babbling. Today, after having observed Bobolinks all this past week, was the first observance of females mixed in with mostly males. After work, I checked out our small water retention area. With all the recent rains there is some water that is being held in what used to be a pond. To my surprise, I found 11 Solitary Sandpipers. I also heard my FOS Indigo Bunting for this location.

– N. Wade Snyder, Shenandoah Junction, WV, 5/7/21

This morning, seven birders joined me for a Mountaineer Audubon spring bird walk on the Raven Rock Trail at Cooper's Rock State Forest near Morgantown. The tem-

perature was in the upper 30s and low 40s, and at times it was windy, foggy, and overcast. It began to hail just as we returned to our vehicles. But there were good birds and good company!

Highlights included several Cerulean Warblers that we all heard, but most of us did not get satisfying looks at. But we did get excellent looks at a female Black-and-white Warbler gathering nesting material; Hooded Warblers having a territorial battle; and lots of American Redstarts. We also watched at least four Red-breasted Nuthatches foraging together in the same tree.

Thank you to the folks who joined me this morning! As always, Mountaineer Audubon's bird walks are free and open to everyone. Check out Mountaineer Audubon's Facebook page and website ([mountaineer-audubon.org](http://mountaineer-audubon.org)) for a list of upcoming walks.

– Katie Fallon, Morgantown, WV, 5/8/21

Early this morning, at Greenbottom, on the road leading to the boardwalk, I heard a Least Bittern calling as soon as I got on the road. I made my way until I figured I was just right across from it and scanned the cattails. Sure enough, it was sitting slightly lower than the top of the cattails, but easily to view. I moved down the road a piece and started to write in my notebook when another Least Bittern flushed, flew across the road, and landed in the same pond as the first bittern was. I birded the boardwalk, not really seeing anything else much of interest, and left. The Least Bittern was still calling when I left the road.

– Rennie Talbert, Barboursville, WV, 5/9/21

I checked our nesting boxes May 10. The Tree Swallows have 4 nests with eggs, 2 nests complete with feathers, but no eggs, and 1 nest without feathers. Interestingly, one of the nests with Tree Swallow eggs was built of pine needles by bluebirds, but sat abandoned for weeks. Guess the swallows decided this ready-made nest was too good to pass up. They didn't even bother to add feathers!

Bluebirds are nesting in 4 boxes, one with eggs, 3 with young. This is fewer bluebird nests than usual. The earliest bluebird nest built this year, March 31, and first with eggs(6), April 15, was abandoned. Four eggs were still in the nest on May 3,



Baby bluebird in a nest box.  
– photo by Cynthia Burkhart

but cold. When I checked on May 10, the eggs were gone. Curious!

In the barn, the Barn Swallows are very busy. They have renovated several of the old nests, completed building 3 new nests, and have started building several more. If they finish them all, there will be 11.

Both the phoebes and robins are nesting in the tractor shed, as usual.

May 11 was the first day we did not see or hear any Evening Grosbeaks. May 10 we only saw 1 female. Our last big group was 25 on May 5. Since then, until the 10th, we saw 5-6 at feeders, but heard more in the trees. Hate to see them go!

– Cynthia Burkhart, Ritchie County, WV, 5/11/21

Hi all, at dusk while conducting marsh bird surveys at McClintic WMA (5 Virginia rails detected), I had the wondrous opportunity to witness hundreds of Barn, Northern Rough-winged, and Tree Swallows foraging for insects over the wetland impoundment just south of Potters Creek Road. I tried very hard to make some of the Northern Rough-winged Swallows into Bank Swallows, but failed. As exciting were several Common Nighthawks foraging very low over the water and at times as close as 20 feet to me at eye level, including one that dipped a wing at one point. Also joining the fray were Chimney Swifts, Eastern Kingbirds, and an Eastern Woodpeewee. Blue-winged Teal, Wood Duck, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, and Belted Kingfisher were also on-hand. What a good evening!

– Rich Bailey, Elkins, WV, 5/12/21

– Sightings taken from  
WVBird ListServ

## CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

### NEW MEMBERS

Janet Belding & Family  
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Email: aredoghans@gmail.com

Ted Boettner  
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Charleston, WV 25301  
Email: tedboettner@gmail.com

Sandy Fenstermacher  
478 Mackle Pt.  
Lewisburg, WV 24901  
Tel: 304-520-6344  
Email: kb8ryy@gmail.com

### CHANGE OF ADDRESSES

Nebraska Ornithologists Union Inc.  
C/O Univ. Of Nebraska  
State Museum  
307 Morrill Hall  
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Lincoln, NE 68588-0338

### EMAIL CHANGES

Cindy Ellis –  
cindy.ellis.bbc@gmail.com



## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

### BIBBEE CHAPTER

*No planned group activities until further notice due to the COVID-19 safety measures.*

### HANDLAN CHAPTER

*All meetings and events are canceled due to COVID-19 until further notice.*

### HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

*Due to recent events, all outings are canceled. See the BBC website for any updates.*

### MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

*No planned group activities until further notice due to the COVID-19 safety measures.*

## NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

*Due to safety measures associated with COVID-19, some activities have been postponed or have COVID protocols and limited attendance. Check with the websites below for details.*

### POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

**June 16, July 21, Aug. 18, 2021** – ‘Third Wednesday’ Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve, 7:00 am - 10:00 am. This event is free and open to the public, however, registration is required and limited to 12 participants. Please register below and note the following guidelines:

Registration is required and limited to 12 participants (if you can no longer attend, please notify [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org) so that others may attend). We encourage that masks be worn when in a group setting. Respect the 6 feet+ apart/physical distancing guidelines when possible. If you are sick or have been sick within the past two weeks (or been around anyone else that is sick), please stay home.

A reminder from eBird to please bird mindfully: <https://ebird.org/news/please-bird-mindfully>

Join Beth Poole on her regularly scheduled ‘Third Wednesday’ bird walk at Cool Spring Preserve.

The trails at Cool Spring preserve have a lot to offer! From well maintained foot paths to gorgeous views, the preserve’s 12 acres is home to much wildlife.

Please meet by 7:00 am in the front parking lot of Cool Spring Preserve, the walk will last a couple of hours.

If you have questions or would like more information, contact Krista Hawley at [adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org](mailto:adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org), or 681-252-1387.

Children ages 12 and up will be welcome but they must be accompanied by an adult.

Participants should wear sturdy footwear, dress appropriately for the prevailing weather conditions, and bring along water. Binoculars will be available for anyone who needs them.

The trip may be cancelled in the event of bad weather.

See [www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/bird-events/](http://www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/bird-events/) for more outings.

### MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON

**June 12, 2021** – 8:00 am, Preston County Backroads Birding. Meet at Bruceton Mills Park & Ride, just off I-68 Exit 23. LeJay Graffious will lead a day of four-wheeling and birding in Preston County. We will meet at the Park & Ride and caravan to Cranesville Swamp. From Cranesville we will use the Orr-Tannery Road (high clearance vehicles recommended) to the Screech Owl Brewery for lunch (if open). Email Katie Fallon to pre-register: [katie@accawv.org](mailto:katie@accawv.org). Leader: LeJay Graffious.

**June 17, 2021** – 7:30 am, Old Hemlock in Bruceton Mills. Join LeJay Graffious for a monthly bird walk at Old Hemlock to watch the arrival of spring migrants and experience the breeding season develop. We will walk approximately two miles and stop at ten predetermined locations to census birds for three minutes. Contact LeJay for directions: [lejay@old-hemlock.org](mailto:lejay@old-hemlock.org).

**July 15, 2021** – 7:30 am, Old Hemlock in Bruceton Mills. See June 17 description.

### WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

**June 19, 2021** – Introduction to Birding. Bring your binoculars and do some observing of our local birds at Canaan Valley. We will start at the CVSP Recreation Center and take a 1-1/2-mile walk through the meadow and into the nearby forest and swamp on an easy dirt path (with some boardwalk too). There will be a few extra binoculars for loan. Remember to wear a mask and to practice social distancing. Your walk leader is Master Naturalist: Laura Ceperley. For more information, contact Dave Vance 304-866-2215 or vanced@canaanresort.com.

**July 2, 2021** – “Wings of Wonder” – Birds of Prey at Cedar Creek. Live birds of prey at Cedar Creek State Park is presented by Three Rivers Avian Center. The educational birds are a great opportunity to learn what bird says “Who cooks for me, who cooks for you all?” as well as meet other raptors.

The evening program is all about raptors native to West Virginia: owls, hawks and eagles. You’ll learn about the habitat, diet and behavior of each bird presented, the most common causes of injury to each species and the laws protecting these special birds. No fee to attend. Open to the public, the program begins at 7:00 p.m. on July 2, 2021, and is family friendly. The program will be at the Cedar Creek Activity Building.

Three Rivers Avian Center of Brooks, WV, (tracwv.org) conducts this wonderful educational program at many state parks across West Virginia as an interpretive program.

For more activities, go to [www.wvstateparks.com/calendar/](http://www.wvstateparks.com/calendar/)



### 16TH WINTER EAGLE SURVEY

On January 9, 2021, the Eagle Brigade of Southern WV (including Three Rivers Avian Center, Bibbee Nature Club, Hanging Rock Migration Observatory, Pipestem State Park & guests) located the following eagles:

**Maggie, VA** – BAEA – 1 adult.

**Narrows, Glen Lyn, VA, & State Line** – No eagles.

**Bertha** – GOEA – 1 adult. BAEA – 3 (2 adults, 1 age unidentified) and unidentified eagle – 1.

**Mouth of the Bluestone** – BAEA – 11 (3 adults, 3 1st year, 2 2nd year, 2 3rd year and one age unidentified).

**Bluestone State Park** – No eagles.

**Rt. 20 Overlook near Bluestone Dam** – BAEA – 11 (1 adult, 7 1st year, 2 2nd year & 1 3rd year).

**Bellepoint** – BAEA – 3 adults.

**Brooks Overlook** – GOEA – 1 adult. BAEA – 2 adults.

**Hans Creek Valley** – BAEA – 3 (1 1st year, 1 3rd year & 1 4th year).

**Greenville** – BAEA – 3 (2 adults, 1 immature).

**Rt. 122** – BAEA – 11 (2 adults, 9 immatures).

**Red Sulphur Springs** – GOEA – 2 adults. BAEA – 3 (1 adult, 2 1st year birds).

**Alderson & Barger Springs** – BAEA – 2 (1 adult at each site).

**Additional sightings outside of time frame for the survey** – BAEA – adult at I-64 Bridge across the Greenbrier River (LP) and adult at Forest Hill (JP).

36 Participants located 4 adult Golden Eagles (GOEA) & 53 Bald Eagles (BAEA) – 19 adults, 13 1st year, 4 2nd year, 4 3rd year, 1 4th year, 10 immatures and 2 unidentified age and 1 unidentified eagle.

**Conditions** – 25-39 degrees, 90-10% cloud cover, 0-3 mph winds and no precipitation.

### 14TH SPRING EAGLE SURVEY

On March 6, 2021, the Eagle Brigade of Southern WV (including Three Rivers Avian Center, Bibbee Nature Club, Hanging Rock Migration Observatory, Pipestem S.P. & guests) located the following eagles:

**Glen Lyn & Narrows, VA** – No eagles.

**State Line nest** – BAEA – 2 (adults). One in the nest. Other carried in food.

**Bertha** – BAEA – 1 (adult).

**Mouth of the Bluestone River** – BAEA – 6 (2 adults, 4 immatures).

**Bluestone State Park** – No eagles.

**Rt. 20 Overlook (south of Bluestone Dam)** – BAEA – 3 (2 adults, 1 immature).

**Bellepoint** – BAEA – 3 (2 adults, 1 immature). GOEA – 1 (immature).

**Brooks Island nest** – BAEA 2 (adults). Two eggs in the nest.

**Beury nest** – BAEA – 2 (adults). Female in the nest, male nearby.

**Lower Greenbrier River, Barger Springs to Alderson** – BAEA – 1 (adult). In Alderson nest.

**Hans Creek Valley, Greenville, Rt. 122** – BAEA – 3 (2 adults, 1 immature).

**Red Sulphur Springs nest** – BAEA – 2 (adults). Mating observed.

**Anthony Creek nest** – BAEA – 2 (adults). One in the nest, the other nearby.

**Pipestem State Park** – BAEA – 1 (adult).

33 participants found 28 Bald Eagles & 1 Golden Eagle. Conditions – 24-55 degrees, 0-30% cloud cover, variable winds 0-8 mph and no precipitation.

– *both contributed by Jim Phillips*



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### **“Towering” achievements**

*Chimney Swift towers, such as this one at the Oglebay Schrader Center, have been erected by BBC chapters and affiliates around the state, thanks to a contribution from the estate of Stu Robbins. See more inside!*

*(Photo by Molly Check)*

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