



THE MAIL BAG

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

VOL. 78, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2021 RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note

First of all, thanks to all of the contributors to this issue. Not only does all of this content give everyone a wide variety of material and experiences to learn from and enjoy, but it also makes an editor's job a lot easier! This is your publication, and all submissions are considered and usually used. The next deadline for submissions is mid-late February.



This is the season to get outside and participate in Christmas Bird Counts. West Virginia has a number of counts in most areas of the state, so you might not be far from one or three you might participate in. The data collected during CBCs is crucial to understanding how are changing winters are affecting bird population dynamics. Differing tree crop loads from year to year also add flavor to local winter birding, as displayed last year with the Evening Grosbeak irruption. While not much is expected from the northern finches and other specialties, it's still a good idea to keep your eyes and ears open for the odd long-minded grosbeak, siskin or Purple Finch. Winter storms might also push in longspurs or other plains birds. See Page 2 of this issue for a complete list of counts, including a couple of new ones in Point Pleasant and Tygart Lake that you may not have heard about.



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, CINDY SLATER

"On the roughest days of winter, when life seems overwhelmed by storm and cold, watch a chickadee, observe in good cheer and take heart."

- Edwin Way Teale, *Wandering Through Winter*

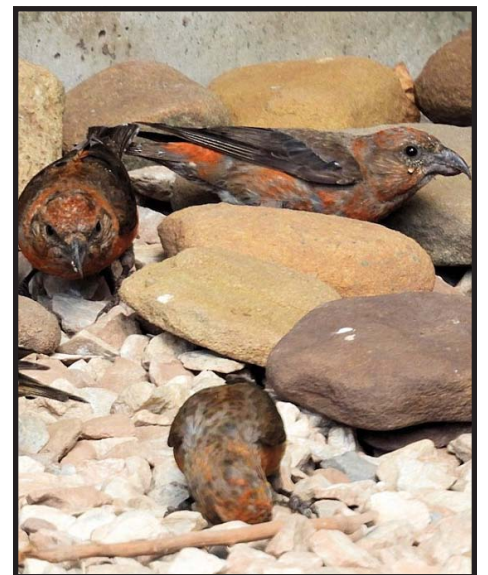
Just a quick note this time to remind you to purchase the best Christmas gift ever. A Brooks Bird Club Membership! It is the gift that keeps on giving and simplifies your shopping list for Christmas.

Fortunately, we had a couple of great events to end the 2021 year. Our fall meeting at Cedar Lakes and the Eastern Shore Trip. Thanks to all who participated in those events it sure was a lot of fun.

We did accomplish to see or hear a total of 99 birds at the shore with Janice Emrick finally getting a Blue Jay in Delaware on their trip home. Thanks! The weather, food, and company were terrific. We have a lot of new special memories to carry with us from both events. Be sure to check out the calendar of events, for 2022, in this issue of the Mail Bag.

Just because winter is coming don't forget to take care of our feathered friends if you can. Feed the birds, watch the birds, and even report what you see by writing a letter for the mailbag. Enjoy the holidays, stay warm, and I look forward to seeing you all soon.

- Your BBC President, Cindy Slater



Red Crossbills are often found around the Cranberry Glades Visitor Center. These were photographed on September 6, 2021.

- photo by Jack O'Connell

2021-2022 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Athens/Princeton

Sunday, December 26, 2021
Ron Canterbury - 513-556-9570
roncanterbury@aol.com (best)

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

Sunday, December 19, 2021
Larry Helgerman - 412-508-0321

Canaan/Tucker Co.

Sunday, December 19, 2021
Casey Rucker - 304-866-4004
autoblock@frontiernet.net

Charles Town

Sunday, December 19, 2021
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com
Register on potomacaudubon.org

Charleston

Saturday, December 18, 2021
Doren Burrell - 304-553-8592
g.immer@doren.net

Elkins Area

Monday, January 3, 2022
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Franklin/Pendleton County

Tuesday, December 21, 2021
Fred Atwood - 703-242-1675
fredatwood@yahoo.com

Hampshire County

Sunday, January 2, 2022
David Malakoff - 703-851-2206

Huntington

Sunday, January 2, 2022
David Patick - 304-633-4450

Inwood

Sunday, January 3, 2022
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com

Lewisburg

Sunday, December 19, 2021
Larry Davis
Benjamin Handley
304-646-0602 - ben@potteryvalley.com

McDowell County

Wednesday, December 22, 2021
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Moorefield

Monday, December 20, 2021
Kyle Rambo - 301-757-0005
Darrell Good

Morgantown

Saturday, December 18, 2021
LeJay Graffious - 304-379-7505
lejajgraffious@gmail.com

Oak Hill

Tuesday, December 28, 2021
Hilary Jones - 304-663-0876
Paul Shaw - 724-678-4604

Ona

Saturday, December 18, 2021
David Patick - 304-633-4450

Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 18, 2021
Jeanette Esker - 304-863-8765

Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 18, 2021
Jim Phillips - 304-466-1275
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

Pocahontas County

Saturday, December 18, 2021
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Point Pleasant

Sunday, December 26, 2021
Josh Holland - jhollandua@gmail.com
304-675-0981

Raleigh County

Sunday, December 19, 2021
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Tygart Lake

Wednesday, December 29, 2021
Matt McKinney - mckinneymi@ab.edu
Ross Brittain - rossalanbrittain@gmail.com

Wheeling

Wednesday, December 15, 2021
Molly Check - 304-242-6855
mcheck@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
wwwarblers@hotmail.com



CORRESPONDENCE

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

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

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

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

2021 FALL MEETING GOES OFF WITHOUT A HITCH – *Contributed by John Jacobs*

Twenty something experienced birders flocked to Cedar Lakes Conference Center, Jackson County, WV for the BBC Annual Meeting October 22nd to 24th. It was the first time we had been together as a group, face-to-face, since our Mid-winter meeting in March of 2020. Far too long ago.

Sidebar: for the record - because it came up. Well okay... I brought it up. I asked if Northern Saw-whet Owl was the only member of the genus *Aegolius*. It is not. There is also:

- Unspotted Saw-whet Owl (*A. ridgwayi*). I believe Bill mentioned this as a subspecies.
- Boreal Owl, also known as Tengmalm's Owl in the old world (*A. funereus*).
- Buff-Fronted Owl of South America (*A. harrisi*) which from the recordings I find on the internet sound suspiciously like Eastern Screech Owl.
- E-bird lists Bermuda Owl (*A. gradyi*) as an extinct specie. Interestingly, they show one record of NSWO in Bermuda – citizen science.

Friday evening's dinner was followed by Bill Beatty's talk about his and Jan's Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) research. And fascinating it was. Okay, I'm easy. I like birds. Still, all enjoyed this outstanding presentation; as comprehensive a description of the life history of this little recluse as I've seen. It's sometimes hard to appreciate just how little is known about some rather common species. Their research is on the leading edge of that knowledge.

Saturday morning a few remained in camp to hike a four mile trail, but most of us went on a day trip to those places made famous by the WV ListServe.

- McClintic State Wildlife Management Area
- Robert Byrd Locks and Dam
- Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area

Then being so near to authentic West Virginia fine dining. The real highlight of the weekend for us Birders cum Foodies - four of us to partook in a 2nd luncheon at Hillbilly Hotdogs in Lesage, WV. That's on your map. Made famous by Chef Guy Fieri on his Food Network show *Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives*, it's everything you might expect from Chef Fieri. Yum-Yum - 4 forks. Actually, to be honest, I didn't see any forks. We made it back to camp just in time for dinner and we ate that too. Then later a campfire and S'mores!

Also Saturday evening Dr. Tom Pauley related his "Memories of 52 years searching WV mountains and valleys for snakes, frogs, and salamanders" referring often to experiences with the BBC and its members who inspired him. Many of whom I knew as a child and who had some influence on me too. And as Bill Beatty said, "for the better".

Sunday's Worship service was lead by Scott Emrick and included a message from Jane Robbins. Jane said something, either explicitly or implicitly, that caused me to think that *Homo sapiens* is the only species to have a view of the world outside of the present, both a past and a future, and a desire to change it for the better. Perhaps it's arrogant of us to think we can do that. Maybe hubris. But it's surely part of our nature. She said, "He who does all things well beckons even the least of us, sons and daughters bearing His own image, to set our sights and compel our labors to excellence, to His glory, by His grace".

We've been given so much. BBC has an history. Nothing makes that more apparent than a weekend with individuals who remind us of the influence the BBC and its members had on them. Yes, I've been around good birders all my life. I've had more than enough opportunity to have become one myself. It's at once exhilarating and intimidating to think of myself as part of that group. We have an obligation to preserve that tradition and to move it forward.

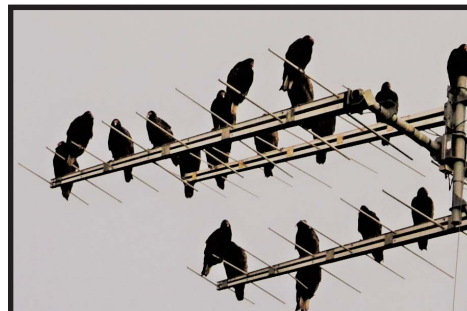
The Membership meeting was lead by President Cindy Slater. Bird list: 55 species seen.

Please attend our Mid-winter meeting North Bend State Park Mar 4-6, 2022 and Foray Camp Galilee (Preston County) June 3-11, 2022.

TUCKER COUNTY VULTURE ROOST IN 2021

For several years we have observed vultures roosting on a cell tower in Davis, West Virginia. The highest number we counted this year was 77. These were mostly Turkey Vultures but Black Vultures were also present. They collect in the evening and disperse in the morning.

– Marjorie Keatley and John Northeimer, Charleston, WV, during 2021.



*Closeup of vultures -
photo by John Northeimer*



*Vultures on tower -
photo by John Northeimer*

50 YEARS OF AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

In the early 1970s, Brooks Bird Club members, Oliver & Yvonne Johnson retired from their work in the northern panhandle of West Virginia and headed south to live in Lerona in Mercer County. Oliver became the first park naturalist for the recently opened Pipestem Resort State Park. I first learned of Oliver from an article in the local newspaper about a Century Day Bird Count in May that he and a small group of interested people conducted in the Pipestem area. The group planned to do an Audubon Christmas Bird Count in the same area. I called Oliver and told him of my interest in birds and asked if I could take part. He set me up with three gentlemen who worked for the Forest Products Laboratory in Princeton. They agreed to pick me up and let me tag along for the count. Thus, the Pipestem Area, WV Christmas Bird Count began in December, 1972. This year, I am proud to say, that I will be the only person to participate in all of the counts. I want to share some of the stories from our bird counts.

Notes on some of the birds:

Vultures – reports for these birds were scattered in the early days. They became regulars on the list in 2001, with both species occurring in numbers.

Canada Goose – DNR officials released this species in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the hopes of establishing an additional game bird. They first appeared on the count in 1981 and have become a nuisance.

Bald Eagle – this raptor was on the endangered species list when the count started. They have steadily increased in numbers with a high count of 16 in 2018.

Ring-necked Pheasant – The release by game officials was not successful. One bird found on 1974 count & one on 1979 count.

Wild Turkey – DNR was working on re-establishing this species when the count began. They were appearing on the count by 1981.

Northern Bobwhite – Fairly common on early counts but not reported since 1976. Extreme cold temperatures

& deep snows in 1977 & 1978 may be responsible, as well as habitat change.

Red-headed Woodpecker – Only found on 1975, 1979, 1983 & 2000 counts and 2018 for count week.

Loggerhead Shrike – This bird was found only in 1974 & 1979.

Cavity dwellers – Most of the woodpeckers and other cavity nesters showed an increase after Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and several ice storms in the 1990s.

Eastern Bluebird – this species and the wild turkey experienced an increase after the periodic cicadas emerged in 1986.

House Finch – this species first appeared for count week in 1978 but soon became abundant.

Evening Grosbeak – The last report for this species was count week in 1999.

Side stories about a few count encounters:

At the mouth of the Bluestone River we encountered a dead and partially eaten black duck. I thought we should add it to our count. When I also suggested that a bald eagle was probably responsible for its demise the group correctly out voted me.

Later, in the Bluestone WMA we met a hunter with his bird dog. When he pulled a Ruffed Grouse from his game pouch, I suggested we had another bird for the list. I don't remember but I'm sure that idea was nixed as well.

Two of our participants discovered a raft of ducks on New River. They started the identification of the birds and counting the individuals when two duck hunters wearing chest waders entered the water and picked up their decoys.

In my early days I was more competitive. Two of us were coming down a steep area of River Ridge when we had to ram into a large hollow tree to keep from landing in the mouth of Pipestem Creek. When we hit the tree, a bird flew out of a hole. I beat my friend to the identification of screech owl, but he topped me by saying "red phase".

At one point, a buddy and I talked my college adviser into doing a count with us. While my buddy was waiting for us to arrive, he hiked to the tower on Pipestem Knob in Pipestem S.P. and

found the only Long-eared Owl we have ever had on the count. When my adviser and I arrived we talked him into going back to see if we could find it. He agreed to bring a tape of its call. Blowing snow and the tower swaying in the wind produced no bird. We told him to try the tape. When he hit the play button, we were assaulted with banjo music. My adviser said, "enough joking, now play the owl call." He had left the owl tape in the car. We discovered that we didn't want to find the owl as much as we originally thought. My adviser never went on another Christmas count.

Probably the most memorable story comes from when Brian McMillan (BBCer & a former student of Judy's chemistry class) was with us at a place called Buzzards Roost on River Ridge, located high above New River. A speeding pickup truck, marked for farm use was coming toward us. I moved over and stopped to give the driver room to pass. The truck stopped next to us. The driver and passenger looked to be brothers older than us, each with a beard and blood shot eyes. The driver accused us of deer hunting. I said, "no we weren't hunting". He said "bull\$#!*". I told him we were bird watching. His reply was, "bull\$#!*, there aren't any birds around here". They appeared to be inebriated. I held up my binoculars and Peterson field guide and repeated that we were bird watchers. Now, he leaned out the window and looked me straight in the eye and said, "Buddy, I think you are the person most full of \$#!* that I have ever seen". Everything went quiet. I replied, "Mister, you aren't the first person to tell me that". Then both of them burst into laughter and became friendly. I noticed a car speeding toward us from behind and excused us to move out of the way. He said don't worry about it, those are our kids coming to check on us. We told each other to have a nice day and headed down the road. Less than mile from the spot, we saw a golden eagle circling over a field. I think that was a life bird for Brian, but I am sure it was one he will remember.

On one count, we were tracking a rabbit in a dusting of snow, when the tracks disappeared. A footprint and wing brush marks indicated it had probably been grabbed by a Red-tailed Hawk.

We thought we had a Common Loon on Bluestone Lake. Closer examination proved it to be a deer swimming across the lake with only its head and ears above the surface.

I have always enjoyed taking part in the Christmas Bird Counts. I'll never forget seeing my first Hooded Mergansers on the Bluestone River in Bluestone S.P. I have loved seeing the Bald Eagles increase in numbers. One evening I hooted at an overlook in Pipestem S.P. and had several Barred Owls appear. They hooted, cackled and even seemed to laugh. It was an owl party. The bird related memory that will last a life time happened in the Bull Falls Campground along New River in the Bluestone Wildlife Management area on December 20, 2014. I arrived before dawn hoping to hear some owls. There were two screech owls calling when I got out of the truck. Before I knew it, I was surrounded by calling screech owls. It was difficult to count them so I settled on the conservative number of four. Then, to my surprise there was a saw-whet owl calling with them. This has to be the chance of a lifetime.

Food is usually part of every Christmas Bird Count. I was on a count when I was first introduced to Taco flavored Doritos. My mom always made peanut butter chews and sausage balls for me to carry on a count. A college classmate who accompanied me on the Oak Hill CBC was a great addition because her granny always supplied us with a box of various homemade Christmas cookies. Of course, a meal was always involved at the end of the day to discuss the day's sightings. Our group met at Kirk's Restaurant in Hinton. It is located on the New River across from the mouth of the Greenbrier River. Later, the owner decided to close for the winter, so we needed another place to gather. By this time, I had become the park naturalist at Pipestem State Park, so I offered the nature center. I would set up crock pots with soup, beans and/or chili

in the center, and we would do a potluck in the evening with a nice fire in the fireplace. I don't know if we got tired of cooking or didn't want to miss birds while we were cooking but someone suggested we move to the Hinton Dairy Queen. That is where we have gone ever since until the pandemic arrived. The Hinton Dairy Queen has an enclosed dining area that hangs out over the New River. Sometimes we have added waterfowl or eagles to our list for the day. Every so often, a feud arises between Kirk's (mentioned earlier) and the DQ about the rights to the secret, original hot dog chili recipe. Both claim they have the recipe in the vault of a local bank. Noah Adams wrote *Far Appalachia* which follows his journey along the New River from its beginnings in the mountains of North Carolina, across Virginia, and ending in West Virginia. In his chapter on Hinton, Adams describes Hinton as the town with the Dairy Queen at the center of the universe. So, I guess the Pipestem area, WV Christmas Bird Count is close to the center of the universe.

The period for Christmas bird counts runs from December 14 through January 5. Compilers always welcome additional participants, so find a count near you and enjoy the birds.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV



2021 EASTERN SHORE TRIP A SUCCESS

Eighteen members attended this year's Eastern Shore trip on November 17-21, 2021. The trip was a week later than previous trips in the hope of seeing Snow Geese.

The Atlantic Sands Hotel in Rehoboth Beach, DE, was centrally located for our daily adventures to local wildlife refuges and state parks. With the hotel located on the beach, we watched the sunrise over the Atlantic and the gulls' first flights for the day. After breakfast each day, Cindy discussed the day's plans, which stayed flexible due to the weather and the upcoming hunting season.

Our first stop on Thursday was to Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, and then our second stop was to Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. We were lucky to have 70 degrees and sunshine to enjoy the wildlife refuges. We all enjoyed the sunset at Bombay Hook while watching the waterfowl settle down for the night. A cold front with rain came through on Thursday night, so Friday was in the lower 50s and breezy when we adventured south to Silver Lake, Indian River Inlet, and Ocean City, MD. Saturday's trip to nearby Cape Henlopen State Park was much more pleasant since it was still cool and the wind had died down.

As for the birds, we saw the "usual suspects" of Carolina Chickadee, Crow, Mallard, Canada Goose, Great Blue Heron, and Ring-billed Gull. The highlights of the trip were Brown Pelican, Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Black Skimmer, Tricolored Heron, American Oystercatcher, American Avocet, Ruddy Turnstone, Long-billed Dowitcher, Common and Red-throated loons, Tundra Swan, White-winged Scoter, female Harlequin Duck, Common Eider, Sanderling, Dunlin, and Brown-headed Nuthatch. In total, we saw 98 species.

Since Oglebay Institute's Mountain Nature Camp introduced me to birding decades ago, I liked birding but always considered myself a novice. Maybe after this trip I might now be an "advanced novice" and even start to keep a list. Ken, my husband, and I really enjoyed this trip and look forward to next year's trip. We met really nice and interesting people, enjoyed good meals, saw the full moon rise over the ocean, saw a fox walking on the boardwalk, and played on the beach. We even saw some neat birds! What a great trip we had!

– *Contributed by Mary Schilstra*

LONGTIME MEMBER DOROTHY “DOT” BROEMSEN PASSES

I met Dot Broemsen at the Brooks Nature Center in February of 1972. Greg Eddy sent me on a winter bird survey with Dot and Glen Phillips in Oglebay Park for the entire morning. Dot and Glen knew so much about birds -- more than I thought I could ever hope to know. When I started as Interpretive Naturalist at the Brooks Nature Center in Oglebay Park, I was surprised to discover that Dot was the secretary there. We became great friends. She taught me so much about identifying birds including mnemonics to help me remember bird songs. In return, each day I would bring her a small vase with a wildflower in it and she would use a wildflower guide to identify the flower. When Dot urged me to join the Brooks Bird Club, I did. When she suggested I attend the West Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage, I did, as well as the BBC Foray. She knew where the best nature education was happening in West Virginia and loved to attend them all.

Dot loved telling people, “There was a time when I knew the birds better than he did.” And that was so true. But thanks in great part to Dot’s early help and encouragement, I did learn the identification of birds by sight and by sound. Dot, her sister Dolores, and I ran a Breeding Bird Survey together for over 20 years.

When I decided to leave the Brooks Nature Center and begin my own business, it was one of my most difficult decisions because I would also be leaving a dear person who I had seen almost daily for 18 years; someone who had enriched my life with her smile, kindness, wonderful sense of humor and friendship. We continued to visit each other and to meet at BBC meetings and other nature-related events. Each encounter brought a touch of joy.

When someone special passes, it’s sometimes easy to think that a light has gone out. But with Dot, when I think of all the wonderful and fun times we had together and when I remember her warm caring and enthusiasm, it feels like there is a light in those memories that can never be extinguished. Dot was to me, and to many others, a very special person.

– *Contributed by Bill Beatty*



*Dot and I walking a trail when we celebrated her 91st birthday.
– photo by Bill Beatty*



*Dolores and Dot at Camp Russell, Oglebay.
– photo from Mike Breiding*



Dolores & Dot – photo by Mike Breiding

OBITUARY

Dorothy B. Broemsen, of Wheeling, WV passed away on September 23, 2021, at 93 years of age.

She was born April 21, 1928, daughter of the late Erwin and Alta (Vincent) Broemsen.

She was an active member of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Wheeling. She retired after 40 years as secretary of the former Brooks Nature Center, now the Schrader Center, Oglebay Institute. She was an active member of the Brooks Bird Club, Meals on Wheels and the Senior Service Center of the Ohio Valley. Dorothy was a member of OPALS of the Ohio Valley Medical Center and the Happy Hilltoppers.

Surviving are her brother-in-law, Jerry Devaul; two nieces, Kathy Devaul and her boyfriend, Sonny Williamson of Leesburg, GA, and Marlene Moore of Wheeling; two great-nephews, Josh (Cecelia) Moore of Triadelphia, and Justin (Dana) Moore of Potomac, MD; great-great-nephew Michael Moore; two great-great nieces, Keely and Aria Moore; great-great-nephew, Preston Moore; great-great-niece, Skyler Moore; and numerous cousins.



*Dot and Jan (Runyan) each holding a Chipping Sparrow when Dot visited for a day of bird banding.
– photo by Bill Beatty*

CORRESPONDENCE

I consider myself to be a “beginning” birder. Birding wasn’t cool for a young teen in 1970 so my best friend Dennis and I hid our binoculars under our shirts as we went out to the field. Jobs, marriage, kids and life interfered with my birding pursuit for about 50 years though I never lost my appreciation for the natural world. Dennis continued birding and is truly a world-class birder.

I am normally very active but about sixteen months ago I sustained an injury that restricted me from walking. I was going stir-crazy in the house and decided that I could resume my birding by driving to different habitats in Greenbrier County and sitting in a chair next to my car, waiting patiently for whatever might come by.

As time went on I found a good handful of productive birding spots. I never came home disappointed as it seemed that my time spent was usually rewarded with some unexpected sighting. With COVID I was unable to meet with other birders so I bought a camera with a telephoto lens to help with ID. On some outings I took as many as 400 photos and spent hours looking through my field guides or sending Dennis photos to make positive ID.

As months went by I became more mobile and I made some pretty cool sightings. Some sightings within an hour’s drive include a Greater White-fronted Goose, Long-tailed Duck, Eurasian Collared-doves (outside of Monroe Co.), Red Crossbills, and even the elusive Loggerhead Shrikes (one of which Rich Bailey was able to capture and band!).

I rarely leave home without my binoculars and camera. My saying is that “You don’t have to GO birding to BE birding” and I have captured some good sightings in improbable places. I never know what will be around the next corner for me, but I won’t be disappointed. Birding is a great hobby for people of all ages and for those with physical limitations.

While I have never been able to participate in any of the BBC’s activities or even meet more than a couple

of the members, I do enjoy reading the printed materials and recognize some of the names in the WV-BIRD listserv, Mountain State Birders Facebook page and eBird. Thank you for helping to educate us and bring us together – even if it is remotely.

– Jack O’Connell

•••

Susie and I are just back from four days at New River Gorge National Park and surroundings. Birds were scarce, to our surprise. A couple dozen TVs circled over the entrance to Hawk’s Nest State Park, right across Rt. 60 from where we were staying, in a nice Airbnb house which Susie had reserved.

We took the Bridge Walk (For the Walk of Your Life it said on the bus). It’s about a half mile, 851 feet above the river. It took just over an hour, with several stops for comments from our guide. The river flowed downstream, from our left to our right. The river was a dark green color, with some rapids which we watched some white water rafters negotiate with no mishap. There were also kayakers and canoers. A nice view from a lofty perch on a nice sunny day. We saw two pigeons on the girders and looked in vain for the Peregrine Falcon nest among the rocks. The guide said the peregrines nest there and control the pigeon population.

They told me that a 95-year-old person had walked the bridge, so at two months short of 96 I think I’ll brag that I’m the oldest person to walk it.

– Bob Rine, Wheeling

•••

Alma Lowry and I went to Chincoteague for our fall trip. We go for birds, seafood, and ice cream. We got loads of all three. We bring back a pint of Chincoteague oysters, Alma fries hers and I make scalloped oysters for Allen. So good, can’t match any stores. We ended up with 99 species for the trip. Weather was great and another wonderful trip. I do look for the ponies. I have a special pony, Riptide, and I did get a good glimpse of him. The NPS and Chincoteague fire dept. (responsible for pony herd) keep them in

good shape. On the island there are sika elk, like a small deer. We have seen them many times, but this was the first year that we got to hear the males bugle. The bugle is different from the bugling of the elk, Wapiti. It’s a little higher in pitch. There was also a great-horned owl calling at the same time. The sunrises and sunsets were stunning. We start early and go late. We took one morning to run up to the other end of Assateague Island in Maryland to look for birds and that herd of ponies. In Maryland, they let the ponies roam free everywhere. We got to see ponies, walk to the beach and get a few more birds.

– Mindy Waldron, Surveyor, WV

•••

Thought you would enjoy a photo of Black Bears behind our condo, taken from the second story. Mom is still nursing her cubs. They hung around for a good hour. Susan stepped out the front door to shake out a rug. When she looked up the female was only about ten feet from her on our driveway. Susan quickly came back inside, and we watched the female and the cubs walk a few feet around our front window to the back.

As we have seen often, our Black Bears come in various colors. The female was typical Black Bear black, one cub was a lighter golden brown, and the other larger cub, maybe a male was darker. Our next door neighbor (Bill’s) garden suffered from some excavation activities, but he doesn’t have much left now that it has been made ready for winter.

– Jay Buckelew, Colorado Springs, CO



INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

Before the start of our first PVAS Summer Concert last evening several of us were discussing Chimney Swifts. Later on that night I heard a sporadic noise I could not identify. It almost sounded like static on the TV program. But when one of my cats sat in front of the fireplace and just stared I knew I had to investigate. After locking up the pets I pulled the flue open but nothing happened. Releasing the pets I sat back down to read. About ten minutes later I heard the noise again and discovered a Chimney Swift against the glass doors. Securing the pets once more I was able to just reach in and pick it up. I was amazed at the strong heartbeat. I released it and it flew off.

This morning I'm having my coffee when I hear this noise again. What, another one? Yep, clinging to the top of the firebox. Another lock down for my critters until I got it and took it outside to release. Had it in my open palm and off it went. This is the first time this happened in the 40 years I've lived here.

– Bruni Haydl, Charles Town, WV, 8/5/21

I have heard several theories that suggest birds evolved from dinosaurs. In fact, I got to see some of the fossils of "early birds" at the Chicago Field Museum in 2017 in a fossil exhibit. Very interesting! But, it came closer to home a few weeks ago as I watched an immature male Cooper's Hawk try to catch a meal in my backyard. My feeders are placed near a small group of large forsythia bushes just inside our 6' wooden backyard fence. The idea being that when the bushes are leafed out, birds can dash into the bushes for cover if an accipiter appears. So, by the time the Cooper's Hawk landed on the top of our fence near the feeders, all the birds had scattered thanks to a Blue Jay warning. The hawk looked around from the top of the fence and then began peering into the forsythias. He gradually walked along the fence slowly checking the bushes very carefully. When he reached the end of the bushes, he flew down to the ground, again walking around the forsythias and peering up into the bushes. Finally, it jumped up and flew quickly into the bushes in an attempt to flush any hiding birds. With this last effort, a Mourning Dove took off out of the bushes with the hawk in fast pursuit. For anyone who has seen the movie Jurassic Park, the scene was like watching the Velociraptors looking for human prey! As I thought about what I had just witnessed, I had to believe I had a predatory dinosaur in my backyard!

– Gary O. Rankin, Lavalette, WV, 8/6/21

It doesn't get better birding than yesterday high in Kanawha State Forest. 70's, big puffy clouds and lots of insects and busy birds. What could be better than looking through the bins at a Prairie Warbler, Parula and a Tennessee Warbler in the same bush about 10 feet away, while being distracted by 5-6 Eastern Wood Pewees sallying around high above. But then...

...two Yellow-billed Cuckoos burst out of the bush, and one made the mistake of relocating where we could watch it through the leaves for a few minutes while it glared at us. (Cuckoos usually exceptionally well hidden, usually never letting me see more than a small piece of them through the leaves). But then...

...gracious, that's a nighthawk flitting around in broad day-light. And it stayed about 50 feet above us feeding for about 15-20 minutes. What a beautiful flyer. Talk about distracting. But then...

...that's a American Kestrel sitting on a pole and now it's flitting around. Oh my, the kestrel and the nighthawk are both in the binocular view, and now there's a hummingbird too. But then...

...when we looked beyond these guys at the swifts, we saw about 50 dragonflies buzzing around apparently eating whatever the nighthawk was after. Gracious sakes! But then...

...on the way back, the cuckoos buzzed us and one sat about 30 feet away, showing off that beautiful tail. Turned out we were almost under their nest.

Wow. What a wonderful morning.

– Laura Ceperley with Sara Miller, Kanawha County, WV, 9/5/21

Hannah Clipp and I birded Little Indian Creek WMA in Monongalia County this morning. Just a little early perhaps for peak Connecticut Warbler time, but following up on the Allegheny Front's 1st banded CONW of the season and super-birder Mollee Brown's FOS sighting, we were hopeful. Luckily we found 2 individuals as LIC proves once again amazingly reliable for this secretive, sought after species. We had 50 species overall, and 13 species of warbler. There wasn't a big influx overnight, so the volume was a little lacking. No raptors moving until a couple of Turkey Vultures passed by on our way out. White-eyed Vireos were everywhere and plenty of American Goldfinches as usual. No Palm Warblers yet and Sparrow numbers remain low. But that will soon change. This coming week really gets into the heart of when CONWs have historically moved through, so for those so interested take advantage, particularly if we have a night of good northwest winds. I will try to get out next weekend to check again for CONWs, until then best wishes to you all.

– Derek Courtney, Morgantown, WV, 9/12/21

Looked out window this morning to see several birds flitting around in barn area. Grab bins and go check them out. As I was standing watching warblers saw adult red-headed woodpecker fly by, what following it but a juvenile. The juvenile landed in tree briefly. I had observed a juvenile in same area yesterday.

Other migrants seen from my stationary position included Chimney Swift; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Eastern Wood Pewee;

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, and Red-eyed Vireos; Swainson's Thrush; warblers, including Tennessee, Cape May, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Yellow-throated, and Black-throated Green, plus Common Yellowthroat and American Redstart; Scarlet Tanager; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; and Indigo Bunting. Added palm and pine warblers late evening in same area.

This evening while picking a few apples hear a Great Horned Owl calling.

– Wilma Jarrell, Wileyville, WV, 9/20/21

At 5:45 p.m. yesterday evening (10/5/21) there were 4 very noisy Red Crossbills feeding in a spruce tree behind H & H Hardware in Thomas, WV. I was pumping gas at the Sunoco and their vocalization caught my attention.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 10/6/21

10/12/2021 4:28 PM

We just returned from a trip to Maine. Though it was not primarily a birding trip, I got to do a good amount of birding. I was sad to learn of some of the changes in birds of Maine due to climate change. We were along the coast where birds like Boreal Chickadees and Canada Jays were commonly seen. Now they are mostly inland and farther north. We didn't see any. Meanwhile, some of "our" birds are moving in such as Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Northern Cardinals.

I was fascinated to see what birds are still singing here in the West Virginia mountains after being away for a period of time. Yesterday, we heard a lot of singing Blue-headed Vireos while hiking on Forest Road 80 and Idleman's Run Trail on the Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

On our walks around our place here in Harman, we still hear Song Sparrows and Eastern Towhees singing. The Song Sparrows sound like first-year birds that are learning their songs. Of course, the Carolina Wrens seem to never stop.

Yes, it is a quiet time of the year, but there is still enough music to keep the outdoors alive.

P.S. (10/13/21) One thing I forgot was that I heard a Ruffed Grouse drumming shortly after we returned yesterday. That was a welcome sound as I have not heard one here in over a year.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 10/12/21

I was wrapping up winterizing our house yesterday and when I came out the basement door I scared a medium size bird hanging out underneath the porch. I immediately realized it was a rail but it ran outside too quick to get a good look.

I followed it outside and it ran around the corner of the house, into the bridal wreath spiraria, sorta letting me see a little more of it, and then it flew across the road and landed on the neighbor's roof. I turned around to make sure the dog was following it, and turned to look for it again and it was gone.

I have pretty crappy eyesight now and it was getting towards dusk, so I am not sure if it was a Sora, or a Virginia Rail. It all happened so quick. But damn, who woulda thunk it. Didn't really have my birdy senses going on at the moment.

It was darkish and pretty even colored, maybe darker on the face. I didn't even have time to note the length of its bill. DERP. If I had to bet my life, I would say it was a Sora.

My lifer Sora was seen in a pine tree at the edge of George Washington H.S.'s football field. So, under a porch isn't too far off.

I also didn't get the feeling that it was doing all that well.

– Andy Weaks, Marion County, WV, 11/4/21

We have had a female Belted Kingfisher regularly fishing our front yard pond this fall. Today she arrived and perched on the shepherds hook long enough for me to get some photos through the window. Photo above right.

– Cynthia Burkhart, Ritchie County, WV, 11/20/21



Belted Kingfisher on shepherds hook.

– photo by Cynthia Burkhart

At Gallipolis Ferry (Mason Co.), I found the following in a mega gaggle: Canada Goose - about 350; White-fronted Goose - 15 (possibly a few more that were hidden from sight); Snow Goose - 6 (1 adult, 5 juveniles); Ross's Goose - 1.

– Mike Griffith, Huntington, WV, 12/2/21

I stopped briefly at the Cranberry Nature Center in Pocahontas Co. today to see if the Red Crossbills are still there. To my delight there were between 40 and 50 of them despite the center being closed and there being no seed set out for them. It is a lot of fun watching them and quite noisy! Last time I was there I recorded their calls and the Finch Network confirmed that these are "Appalachian or type 1".

Based on my relatively regular trips to the nature center it is a pretty sure bet that if you go there you will see crossbills. Enjoy!

– Jack O'Connell, 12/3/21

– **Sightings taken from
WVBird ListServ**

JOANN CHAMBERS PASSES

Joann Chambers passed away April 30, 2021, at the age of 88. She grew up in Huntington, WV, the daughter of Ralph and Virginia Mylar. She met her soulmate, William E. Chambers, at Madison Avenue Christian Church while still in middle school, and together they celebrated 62 years of marriage this past summer. Joann was a teacher prior to raising her family.

Joann and Bill were members of the BBC, attending European and Eastern Shore Trips.

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

Laura Traylor & Family
235 Betty St.
Wheeling, WV 26003
Tel: 757-478-1271
Email: laurascott711@gmail.com

Gary Nickel
416 Silverstone Ln.
Berkeley Springs WV 25411
Tel: 516-784-7972
Email: papo.nickel@gmail.com

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Herb & Sarah Myers
2715 Fruit Farm Ln.
Keezletown, VA 22832-1041



CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

Jan. 8, 2022 – Eagle Survey. Contact Mindy Waldron for more information at mwaldron@suddenlink.net.

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

Dec. 15, 2021 – ‘Third Wednesday’ Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve, 7:30 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 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 7:30 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, 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.

Jan. 22, 2022 – C&O Canal Winter Bird Survey, 8:00 am - 12:00 p.m. Trip Leader: Bill Telfair

This event is free and open to the public, registration is required and limited to 9 participants.

For over 20 years, birds along the entire 185 miles of the C&O Canal have been counted. This survey, which had been coordinated by the District of Columbia Audubon Society, is designed to provide a snapshot count of birds present on the C&O Canal.

Join Bill Telfair for this bird survey walk along a 3-mile stretch of the canal towpath (MP 71, 72 and 73).

Participants should gather across the Potomac River from Shepherdstown at the large National Park Service parking area on Canal Road (past the railroad bridge) at 8:00 am SHARP.

Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate. This is a good walk for those still working on their bird identification skills, but intermediate/advanced birders are also encouraged to help.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Bill Telfair at wbchtelfair@sbcglobal.net or 408-966-8895.

The count will take place regardless of the weather (only a very severe storm will alter scheduled survey) so please dress appropriately and wear comfortable footwear to walk the full three-mile route.

Binoculars will be available for those who need them, however please bring binoculars if you have them.

Registration is required and limited to 9 participants (if you can no longer attend, please notify adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org so that others may attend). Please bring along a mask, you may be asked to wear it when in a group setting. If you are sick or have been sick within the past two weeks (or been around anyone else that is sick), please stay home

See www.potomacaudubon.org/calendar/category/bird-events/ for more outings.

BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

MARCH 4-6, 2022

NORTH BEND STATE PARK

The Early Spring Meeting will be at North Bend State Park at the remodeled lodge. Come and join us for a weekend of fun, fellowship, programs, field trips, adventures and our board and general membership meetings. Check out the new facilities. Registration and check-in time is 3:00 p.m. on Friday with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Departure will be on Sunday after the annual membership meeting.

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.

As last meeting, 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 still have lunch at the dining room on Sunday but you will have to pay for it separately.

Deadline for reservations is January 31, 2022
Make checks payable to **BROOKS BIRD CLUB** and mail to:

Richard Esker
104 Wellesley Dr.
Washington, WV 26181

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

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

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$_____

INCLUDE E-MAIL OR MAIL ADDRESS FOR RESERVATION CONFIRMATION



•••

“Da Bears!”

*Relocated member Jay Buckelew
photographed this mama and
baby bear from his new home in
Colorado Springs.
See more inside!*

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