



THE MAIL BAG

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

VOL. 80, ISSUE 3

JULY – AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 2023

RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Message from your President & Mail Bag Editor

Foray 2023 was another success. The weather cooperated, going from quite hot to quite cool in a real hurry. There were plenty of birds, including new species for Foray lists. New participants were plentiful and the programs were educational. Much thanks go to our Foray directors, Janice Emrick and Mary Murin, and all supporting cast and members helped make the job easier for all.



The new BBC steering committee convened to begin sorting out its responsibilities to the club. Chairman Rodney Bartgis created various surveys that were sent out to members, non-members and more, and we hope that the returns on these questionnaires will give the committee a better idea as to where the club might go over time. We've succeeded for over 90 years, but there is always room for growth and improvement



Webmaster Larry Helgerman has added a link on the BBC website on the main page and the AFMO page for making donations to support the AFMO banding station. This is one major way that the club can receive donations to assist the operations of the banding station. Another way that has been proposed is to create a small sign to keep at the station so people can scan a code from the sign onto their cell phones to make donations. Yes, reception at The Sods is very spotty, but this will allow visitors to save the information to their phones for use later.

You can access the fund page from the BBC Home page and the AFMO page, you can go to https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=ZWS8C3AYQ4ZNC, or you can scan the QR code below to be taken to the Paypal page directly. Any donation is appreciated!



– Ryan Tomazin



Hummingbird Clearwing Moth



Pitcher Plant



A fawn at camp. Many fawns were seen.

Save the Date!

Register soon
to reserve a spot
October 20-22, 2023
BBC Fall weekend at
Chief Logan State Park

HELEN WYLIE PASSES

Dear Friends of TA Mountain Nature Camp,

It is with deep sadness that I am letting you know about the passing of our long-time friend and teacher Helen Wylie. This year at camp we were able to have a whole-camp phone call with Helen, which I know she loved, and we sang the "Mystery Flower" song to her, which she did not love, but laughed anyway.

Although she thought, and told others, that she could teach the same things every year because we never remembered what she taught us, many of us learned a lot from Helen and did remember some of it.

Below is Helen's obituary. If Helen's passing speaks to your heart, the last line of the obituary explains how to donate to the Wylie Scholarship Fund for Mountain Camp.

In the years since she taught at MNC, Helen has been missed, and now will be missed even more. We love you, Helen.

— Jan Runyan



•••

Helen Nortemann Keitzer Wylie peacefully departed from this world on July 20th, 2023, at the age of 93, in New Bloomfield, Pennsylvania. She was born on July 29, 1929, in Wheeling, West Virginia to the late Harry and Mildred Seidler Nortemann.

Helen graduated from Warwood High School and West Virginia University. Following graduation, she worked for the YWCA in Wheeling. Helen was also a substitute teacher in Woodsfield, Ohio, and Harrisburg, PA. She volunteered with the Girl Scouts in Woodsfield and served as manager at General Nutrition Centers in the Harrisburg area. She had many dear friends in Wheeling, Woodsfield, Harrisburg and in Terra Alta, WV before she moved to New Bloomfield, PA with her daughter, Beth. Beth and her husband Barry were compassionate and loving caregivers.

Helen enjoyed being outdoors, especially looking for wildflowers. She had a long association with Oglebay Park in Wheeling and spent many decades at Junior Nature Camp where she was affectionately known as "Aunt Helen" and "Crafty". She also attended Oglebay's Mountain Camp in Terra Alta where she shared her love of wildflowers.

Helen will be dearly missed by her daughters, Amy Keitzer-Wallace of Tionesta, PA, and Beth (Barry) Arnold of New Bloomfield, PA. She is also survived by her grandchildren, Jacob (Cortney) Arnold of Newport, PA, Joshua Arnold of Philadelphia, PA, Grace (Patrick) Wallace of Anchorage, AK, and Jill Wallace of Philadelphia, PA. Also surviving are Helen's sister, Martha Hartley of Shallotte, NC, and sister-in-law, Patricia Rodriguez of Lower Burrell, PA. Nieces and nephews survive, as well as her husband Bill's family, many dear friends, and her "camp family".

Helen was preceded in death by her parents, Harry and Mildred Seidler Nortemann, her husband William "Bill" Wylie, her sister, Evelyn Stewart, and the father of her daughters, Ronald Keitzer.

Memorial donations may be sent to the Wylie Scholarship Fund at Oglebay Institute, 1330 National Road, Wheeling WV 26003. Checks should be made payable to "Oglebay Institute" with "Wylie Scholarship" on the memo line. Thank you.

Helen's warm presence and love for nature will be deeply cherished by all who knew her. Her family and friends will forever remember her as a devoted mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

CONTACT THE EDITOR

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

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



CORRESPONDENCE

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

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

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

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

2023 TUCKER COUNTY FORAY DAILY REPORTS - photos by Michelle Stevens

Fri. June 2 – Sat., June 3, 2023

We found many BBC members heading to camp Horseshoe for the annual foray. The afternoon was spent settling into dorms, rustic cabins or tents. Dinner was the first official event of this years foray where friends old and new were greeted. After dinner we met to map out our game plan for the week.

Saturday morning started early with the morning bird walk followed by breakfast. Saturday am gave us free time. My group of nine headed out to measure an area for a plot study. Although the terrain was rough and the vegetation thick the birds were fabulous. I enjoyed the opportunity to watch a Canada Warbler as it gave quiet a show darting from branch to branch. The afternoon we participated with John Fichtner to learn more about trees and shrubs. Dinner was followed by a great presentation by BBC's Martin Tingley. It was a fabulous day to be a birder!

– by Kelly Schetselaar

Sun., June 4, 2023

No report.

Mon., June 5, 2023

No report.



American Toad

Tues., June 6, 2023

In the late 1980's we attended several Forays with our four pre-school children. We have many fond memories of those adventures, as do our children.

We were finally able to join the Tucker County Foray 2023 after an over 30 year absence. We were immediately made to feel welcomed, comfortable and part of the "Brooks" Family. It was great to reminisce about members of the past



Aaron Graham leading the Club at the Beall Tract

and to meet so many new members who have kept that same spirit of cordiality, camaraderie and the love of birds and really all of nature, alive and thriving. It was truly a real joy for us to be welcomed back in this way after all those years!

After joining several bird outings and trips to many interesting habitats, Mary and I decided to take a trip ourselves during an "open" morning. We chose the Canaan Valley boardwalk on Freeland Road on the recommendations of Janice, Scott and Ryan. We were happy to not only hear but see singing Yellow Warblers and Common Yellowthroats, as well as singing Swamp and Savannah Sparrows. We were even fortunate enough to get our telescope on them! So beautiful!! We heard many Alder/Willow flycatchers but found it hard to distinguish them based on song alone. Ryan Tomazin, who had been there earlier in the week and who we think has the best ears on the East Coast, said that both species were there in abundance.



Herp searching

In the afternoon, we went on the Amphibian Walk led by Martin Tingley along Horseshoe Creek below camp. Under Martin's direction and with the help of many Brooks members especially Wilma, Theo and Shepard, the Tolka

children, many salamanders were found, and Kelly Schetselaar found a Northern Brown Snake. Reptiles and amphibians are a favorite of ours and it was great to include these animals in the Forays over the years.

In the evening, we attended an excellent lecture by Ed Michael on kestrel boxes.

Following his talk, we were treated to several screech owl trills on a brief walk along the creek.

Today was a great day in the Foray for us, as were all the days!!

What a great Foray it was!

– by Dan & Mary Dellatorre

Wed., June 7, 2023

Wednesday was a split day with some going on a Cheat River kayak trip and others going to the Fernow Experimental Forest.

The kayak trip was described as a wonderfully exhausting afternoon. The water was low on the Cheat, so the trip was only 4 miles instead of the planned 8 and required some dragging of boats through shallow areas. Even though it was cold, some swam at the lunch spot. Brrr! They saw neat geological features, a water snake that had eaten recently, a Common Merganser with a baby and two mature Bald Eagles.



Olsen Bog

The Fernow forest group carpooled and stopped at various spots throughout the forest. There was a sign at each area indicating what that forest plot was being used to study. Sightings included several kinds of butterflies and various bird species including Redstart and Red-breasted Grosbeak. We heard a Mourning Warbler

(continued on Page 4)

singing for quite a while but even with all the eyes scouting we never did catch sight of him. We stopped for lunch beside the creek and a trillium was located. Many plants and trees were identified. This is an area well worth an exploration.



American Kestrel

– by *Michelle Stevens*

This was my first foray with the BBC. I felt very welcomed. All the members are so helpful in sharing their knowledge. I plan to attend again! Thank you all!

Thur., June 8, 2023

Following the morning bird walk and a good breakfast, curious BBCers led by Martin Tingley enjoyed hunting for salamanders and other water creatures. On Dawn and Tom Fox’s afternoon fern walk along the Black Fork River, at least 15 different kinds of ferns were spotted including a Bladder Fern, Glade Fern, Walking Fern, and Fragile Fern. We learned that Common Horsetail was the size of a tree three million years ago. We also enjoyed watching a Common Merganser and her six ducklings on the river.

Sheldon Owen, Wildlife Extension Specialist with the WVU Extension Service, gave the evening program titled, “Bats of WV.” Twenty percent of mammals in the world are bats. The most common bats in WV are the big brown bat, the little brown bat and the Virginia big-eared bat. These bats eat 75% -

125% of their body weight each night. The majority of WV bats roost under bark. They breed in the fall and produce one pup per year. Their normal lifespan is 17-18 years up to 32 years. In winter, WV bats hibernate. Wind turbines can damage bats’ lungs due to a change in air pressure. Millions of bats have been lost to white-nose syndrome which is found in 37 states. It was a full day of learning and fun!

– by *Sally Egan*

Fri., June 9 – Sat, June 10, 2023

It was a cool and slightly overcast morning for the 6:30 AM bird walk. Tom Fox led the group down towards the open fields at the main camp then back up the path that followed the creek behind the campground. Dawn Fox spotted a small hanging, cup-like nest low in a small shrub along the path. It had two small white eggs inside, and soon an Indigo Bunting flew in to attend to the nest. As the group walked the path, a Louisiana Waterthrush seemed to escort them along the way. Two Parulas were also heard singing in opposition to one another.



Harris' Checkerspot – Beall Tract

After breakfast, most of the group headed to the Beall Tract for a butterfly tour lead by Aaron Graham. Despite the cool and breezy conditions, we were able to find a few nice butterfly species including a Harris’ Checkerspot, a few Blue Azures, and a couple of American Copper butterflies. Some of the birds that were seen and/or heard included: Savannah Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, American Kestrel and Eastern Bluebird. As we headed to a more woody area, we saw or heard a



Walking around Camp Horseshoe

Brown Creeper, Hooded Warbler, and a Common Yellowthroat.

When we left the Beall Tract, some of the group went to the Freeland Road boardwalk situated in the wetlands of the Canaan Valley National Refuge. Some of the birds seen there were, Yellow Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cedar Waxwing and Willow Flycatcher.

Later that evening Kevin Dodge gave a presentation on how to identify birds by sound. After this very informative as well as amusing presentation, we headed down to the dining hall for cake and ice cream to celebrate the conclusion of our Foray.



Pink Lady's Slippers were found around the county

On Saturday morning we all ate a hearty last breakfast together and sang a few “Goodbye, see you next year” songs. Then we headed out to our respective home bases. Hopefully, we’ll all be able to reunite next June for another great week of Foraying activities in beautiful Pocahontas County, WV.

– by *Mary Murin*



Aaron Graham shows off a Chalk-fronted Corporal at the Beall Tract

GARDENING IS FOR THE BIRDS... AND OTHERS

by Marjorie Keatley

Our article in *The Redstart* (Volume 88 No. 3) details the steps we've taken during our years in Charleston to move from a sterile yard to one that better serves the wildlife and us. We were focused on creating suitable habitat but didn't really consider the vegetable and flower beds as part of that.

The size and layout of our yard do not lend well to vegetable gardening so we have used raised beds or pots. The raised beds have covers of mesh or hardware cloth. This restricts birds and mammals but allows pollinators inside. Once the produce is well under way or finished, we open the cover and birds can access the inside to glean for insects. To control runoff and provide space for my favorites—flowers—John added tiered beds rimmed with rocks. While most of the rock walls in our yard and neighborhood are mortared, the flower bed walls are stacked stones. These provide lots of nooks and crannies for creatures to forage and take shelter.

Last summer (2022), Dr. Mike Beck from the Huntington Museum of Art referred us to the books of Doug Tallamy that are all about gardening for wildlife, whether it is flower beds, vegetable beds, yard, or woods. Reading these books led to a complete change in how I look at the flower beds in our yard. Before, I planted for me—what I liked, what looked pretty, what someone gave me, what I found on clearance. I deadheaded and snipped, removed spent flowers and leaves, and discarded anything that resulted in an “untidy” appearance. In the fall, I really went at the cleanup, removing all the spent foliage, flowers, and tree leaves so that the garden would look nice during the winter. I have learned that “nice” is relative. Nice to me was a wasteland to the wildlife.

The change in my thinking had started even before Tallamy's insight when, last spring, I started cleaning winter's leaves a bit too early. I pulled out a handful of leaves from a depression and uncovered a young Ravine Salamander. I quickly replaced the leaves but it caused me to reconsider all that “tidying up.” What I'd looked at as debris was necessary cover for the salamander. What else had I been removing that was needed by some other creature?

After reading several of Tallamy's books on the importance of trees (especially oaks), drifts of and variety in nectar and host plants for insects, and other uses of cover in the yard (egg, larvae, pupae, etc.), when time came to clean up the beds last fall, there were many reasons not to; chief among them—providing cover for worms and insects that provide winter food for other creatures. I deadheaded through the summer as needed but left the last blooms on the plants. Not only do the wildlife benefit but so do I. Leaving flower heads provides seeds for birds and places for bugs and spiders to hang out. Hollow stems provide places for insects such as Mason Bees to deposit eggs. It is much easier to clean beds in the spring than in the fall. The fallen foliage may not be so nice to look at but my view of it has changed. Instead of an unkempt garden, I now see habitat. Just as a woods in winter has its own beauty, so does a garden in winter.

I often see birds slipping under and behind decaying foliage. One day, a Carolina Wren worked the large mass of dianthus cascading off the wall—slipping out of sight between the dianthus and the wall and periodically peeking out through openings in the foliage. It was gleaning insects as it went. I've found that dead and prostrate daylily provides excellent cover for all sorts of bugs and worms.

We now keep piles of leaves around the perimeter of the yard and in the backs of flower beds. We often see birds flipping leaves, looking for food. The decaying leaves and plants enrich the soil, save lots of time for us by not removing them, provide a free source of mulch, and provide a nursery and protective cover for all manner of insects and creatures. As additional habitat, we have left logs, stacks of firewood, and brush piles of sticks and weed debris. When we had to remove a hollow oak for safety reasons, we left about 20 feet of the trunk for bugs, beetles, and birds to use. As much as possible, we avoid disturbing spider webs. This summer a wolf spider made use

of an old bird house on a deck table and constructed a web inside it that extended out to nearby plants. The spider was safe and unsuspecting insects landing on the plants became easy prey.

Having more plants that provide food for wildlife and in bigger masses than before is a goal. I no longer succumb to the lure of just any old clearance plant or offering from a friend. It has to meet the criteria of being useful to the wildlife. We are no longer mowing much of the upper part of the yard, allowing leaves to accumulate and whatever wildflowers that grow there to flourish. Asters, goldenrods, blue-eyed grass, Deptford Pinks, dogbane, and others are beginning to flourish. We continue to move plants around to free up space for shrubs that provide food and cover. The end result is a garden that provides beauty, food, and ease of care (well, somewhat). We now use mostly native plants, which have the added bonus of needing less water to survive. We try to add plants that are hosts for all stages of bees, bugs, beetles, moths, butterflies, wasps, and flies. As of this writing, John has photographed over 200 species of insects. This week I watched eight Tiger Swallowtail Butterflies on the zinnias, each coneflower was topped by a bumblebee, and a young praying mantis was on a fern.

The garden “debris” is no longer seen as unsightly but as a cafeteria for the creatures in our yard. My notion of beauty has changed from pristine flower beds full of posies to a sense of fulfillment in knowing that all those “dead” plant parts are providing sustenance and shelter. The bonus is that, come late spring when it really is necessary to do some cleanup, last year's plant parts are dead and decaying and easily pull up or break off, saving wear and tear on my hands and saving time. That material can be added to the compost or leaf piles to continue its good work or can be mulched and used in various places. *Garden Gate* magazine (Spring 2023, No. 170) recommends waiting until nighttime temperatures are staying in the 50s to clean up beds. This meshes well with the need to wait until

(continued on Page 9)

MORGANTOWN BIRDING CUP RESULTS 2023

Results are in for the fourth annual Morgantown Birding Cup!

Thank you to everyone who participated and supported the 2023 Morgantown Birding Cup, a friendly 24-hour competition with the goal of bringing friends, families, and individuals together to have fun and count bird species, as well as to raise awareness about the West Virginia Young Birders Club.

This year's Cup had two categories: at-large and at-home. Participants in the at-large category may count bird species in any and all of the five West Virginia counties in Mountaineer Audubon's region (Harrison, Marion, Monongalia, Preston, and Taylor). Participants in the at-home category travel only within walking distance from where they live.

This year, more than fifty people participated in the Cup, including a ten-month-old baby and several new teams in addition to returning teams. And without further ado...

At-Large Category:

FIRST PLACE: The RUBL Alliance – 128 species. This new team of Atlee Wise and Aaron Graham tallied an impressive 128 species over 24 hours, including Blue-winged Teal, Least Sandpiper, and Northern Saw-whet Owl. Species they missed: Downy Woodpecker!

SECOND PLACE: The Defenders – 127 species. Defending 2022 winners Mike Mosser and Kyle Klotz fell just one species short of the 2023 winners, and we have a feeling they will be back for a rematch next year. Species tallied included Barn Owl and Marsh Wren. Species missed: Hairy Woodpecker!

THIRD PLACE: The Hemlock Hermits – 103 species. This Preston County-based team comes close every year. This year's team (LeJay Graffious, Cheyenne Carter, Amy Hill, Staton Davis, and Catherine Whitworth) tallied 103 species. They almost missed a Mallard but found one at the last minute.

A very distant **FOURTH PLACE** was The Peregrine Fallons with 62 species. Some members of this team stayed up too late the night before, and then requested pancakes in the morning before heading out, which resulted in the team getting a late start on Saturday morning... Species missed: Cerulean Warbler.

At-Home Category:

FIRST PLACE: The Downsy Woodpeckers – 80 species. This team of Emma Lendt and Michael Downs, along with young birders Finn and Graham, walked sixteen miles around their Preston County home to tally an impressive 80 species, including Warbling Vireo, Bobolink, and Tennessee Warbler. Species missed: Black Vulture.

SECOND PLACE: The American Robinsons – 78 species. A close second-place finisher was the team of Megan Robinson and young birder Natalie, tallying 78 species, including Least Flycatcher and Warbling Vireo. An impressive list from Morgantown!

THIRD PLACE: The Bird Whisperer – 47 species. Marycharmain Belcastro tallied 47 species near her home, including Wild Turkey, White-eyed Vireo, and Orchard Oriole.

FOURTH PLACE: Larry Schwab – 45 species. Larry birded in Core Arboretum, where he tallied 45 species, including Warbling Vireo and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Thank you again to all participants and **CONGRATULATIONS** to the winners. We hope everyone had fun, and we hope you're back for next year's Morgantown Birding Cup, which will be the 5th annual. We have some ideas for next year's Cup, including moving it a week or two earlier, and possibly adding "County Cup" prizes and prizes specifically for young birders. If anyone is interested in helping with the planning and execution of the 2024 Morgantown Birding Cup, or if your business is interested in

sponsoring prizes, shirts, food, or drink, please let us know.

Thanks, and be well,

Katie Fallon
Executive Director,
Avian Conservation Center
of Appalachia
286 Fairchance Road
Morgantown, WV 26508
(304) 906-5438
<http://www.accawv.org>

Check out the WV Young Birders' Club, an outreach project of the ACCA: <http://www.wvybc.org>

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

Taylor Burdette & Sam Kmetz
322 Tea Table Rd.
Nitro, WV 25143
Email: teeburde@gmail.com
304-552-1776

Gregory Gage
225 Burt St.
Sistersville, WV 26175-1603
Email: ggage928@gmail.com

October Greenfield
13550 Heathcote Blvd., Apt. 328
Gainesville, Va. 20155
Email: Octobergreenfield@gmail.com
605-370-1061

William Kee
64 Society St.
Charleston, SC 29401
Email: keewg64@gmail.com
843-452-9684

Jose Martins
170 Bentonville Rd.
Mount Olive, NC 28365
Email: jsmartins@ymail.com
321-961-4539

Cynthia Mullens
75 Poplar Dr.
Grafton, WV 26354
Email: emeraldjo@yahoo.com

Zealon Wight-Maier
1 Sassafras St.
Maidsville, WV 26541
Email: zealonwightmaier@gmail.com
304-322-5229

Joseph Niederhauser
232 Frisco Ln.
Bridgeport, WV 26330
Email: niederhauser.j@wvwc.edu
734-260-3058

Christopher Rota
565 Harvard Ave.
Morgantown, WV 26505
Email: christopher.rota@gmail.com

CHANGE IN ADDRESS

Luke, Arthur and Eloise Head
2106 Kanawha Blvd. East
Apt. 305
Charleston, WV 25311



CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

September 23, 2023 – McDonough WR, 8:00am. McDonough parking lot.

September 28, 2023 – Kroger Wetlands & Broughton, 8:00am. Kroger wetlands parking lot.

October Coordinator: Barbara Hohman
740-374-5548

October 5, 2023 – Business / Planning Meeting, 9:00am. ORINWR, Conference Room. Come at 8:00 for birding before the meeting

October 12, 2023 – Leith Run, 9:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

October 14, 2023 – Big Sit, sunrise to sunset. ORINWR Parking Lot, Ohio River Islands NWR. Come anytime; stay as long as you like.

October 19, 2023 – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, Northwest Pipe Drive.

October 26, 2023 – Middle Island area, 9:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

November Coordinator: Sandy Albrecht
740-373-8994

November 2, 2023 – Devol's Dam to Civitan Park, 8:00am. Big Sandy in Parkersburg or 8:30am at Warren's IGA parking lot.

November 9, 2023 – Ohio River north, 9:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

November 16, 2023 – Seneca Lake, Ohio, 8:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

November 30, 2023 – Ohio River south, 9:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7, bring lunch.

December Coordinator: Lucine Wright
740-373-6230

December 7, 2023 – Christmas Luncheon.

December 14, 2023 – Middle Island area, 9:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

September 16, 2023 – Our next meeting is scheduled at Barkcamp State Park in eastern Ohio. Meet at 10 a.m. at the first parking lot after you go over the bridge in the park. After walking around, we can convene for a sack lunch.

October 3, 2023 – Tuesday, 6:00 is a meeting at the Schrader Center at Oglebay Park. Paul McKay will be presenting "The Many Genders of the White-throated Sparrow". Bring a dish to share, your plate and place setting.

BIBBEE CHAPTER

September 16, 2023 – Jim and Judy Phillips will be conducting the annual fall hawk watch on East River Mountain above Bluefield WV. He's planning for it to be Bibbee Nature Club day for the hawk watch. He'll be there from 10 AM to 2 PM.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON

Our programs are free and open to the public— everyone is welcome. All are scheduled for 7 pm on the second Tuesday of each month and are presented via Zoom. We will send Zoom invitation links to Mountaineer Audubon members through our Email listserv, If you are not a member and wish to receive the Zoom meeting information and link, please send a message to our email: info@mountaineeraudubon.org.

September 12th at 7:00 pm. "The Decline of Forest Birds and the Importance of Young Forest Habitat" Presented by Joshua Rittenhouse with Mid-Atlantic Audubon. In this webinar, Joshua will discuss the importance of young forest habitat, how it can be created sustainably, and why we must re-establish this vegetation type if we are to save forest birds.

October 10 at 7:00 pm, "Bird Friendly® Certified Coffee: Conserving Birds One Cup at a Time" Presented by Kirstin Hill, Program Manager, Smithsonian Bird Friendly®. During this talk, Bird Friendly® Program Manager Kirstin Hill will describe the link between coffee and conservation, discuss what makes Bird Friendly certification the gold-standard in biodiversity protection, and share ways to get involved in the movement to "Drink Bird Friendly®." Your coffee is stronger than you think!

November 14 at 7:00 pm. "A Movement Unseen: Bird Migration in Action" Presented by Dr. Kyle Horton is an assistant professor at Colorado State University in the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology. Dr Horton uses remote-sensing tools, like radar, to better understand how many migrants fill the nighttime airspace, determine where and when migrants are impacted by artificial light, and how these data can be integrated with community science records to better understand migration and forecast movements.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

I was awakened at 5:35 this morning by a Northern Cardinal. This made me think of George Hall. When we moved to Pipestem in 1993 we got an excited call from George. He asked us to take over the U.S. Fish & Wildlife 25-mile Breeding Bird Survey that started on Hix Mt. in Summers County, crossed the Greenbrier River at Talcott and ended up on Indian Creek at Red Sulphur Springs, Monroe County. Starting time was 1/2 hour before sunrise - about 5:35 a.m.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 5/20/2023

Today a very uncommon bird for WV, Clay-colored Sparrow, was confirmed on Old Hemlock in the 2022 Clear Cut. On May 10, Lee Miller, who was practicing using Merlin audio identification app, picked a Clay-colored Sparrow (CCSP) song report. Since Merlin is not 100%, the report was not verified. Then on June 28 Jane and Alan Clark were substituting for me on Old Hemlock's Monthly Bird Walk. They heard a bird similar to a Blue-winged Warbler and saw a sparrow singing the song. Today I verified that the bird was a CCSP by photograph. This bird is a more northern bird with a few nesting records and locations in WV.

– LeJay Graffious, Bruceton Mills, WV, 6/29/23

Good morning! Yesterday I was treated to a rufous phase screech owl sleeping in a hollow tree, face toward the sun. I have never seen one during the day. The sun on the red feathers was just beautiful.

Shortly after seeing the owl, I noticed some movement in a low service berry tree and saw an immature male Rose-breasted Grosbeak enjoying the berries. The faintest pink feathers were just beginning to appear in his neck/breast area.

This is one of the things I love about birding; each day brings an opportunity to see something we have never seen before!

– Shannon Burner, New Creek, WV, 7/6/23

Just had Wood Thrush doing alarm call. The Wood Thrush flew to the mulch pile doing the alarm call and then flew back into the woods. Two catbirds were already at the mulch pile. One was doing the broken wing act. I thought at first the catbird had hurt wing, but then I noticed a black snake in the mulch pile. The catbird was flying at the black snake. This also brought a curious Great Crested Flycatcher who observed from a distance.

I would NEVER kill a black snake if I see them in the road I try to pick them up or get them to cross the road & so they will not get run over. Who says that July is a dull month for birding & not many people go birding in July. So says eBird. It is an exciting month lots of parents feeding young

– Diane Holsinger, VA, 7/6/23

Kermit Stover called me Tuesday to tell me about at least 4 Red-headed Woodpeckers that he and his son have seen near where he lives. It is quite a good story. He saw male and female and young woodpeckers. The male and female mated and the adult male fed the young for quite a while.

– Mindy Waldron, Hinton, WV, 7/12/23

I had a really fun time birding in Wirt County from July 17 mid morning to July 19 midafternoon. I selected this county to dig into because it was the county with the fewest number of lists in eBird so I thought it would be helpful to add some more data to the database. I ended up with 83 species.

– Fred Atwood, Cabins, WV, 7/19/23

On Sunday 7/16/2023 a Roseate Spoonbill was seen and photographed by a bicycle rider on the Greenbrier River trail in Pocahontas County just north of Seebert where Stamping Creek empties into the Greenbrier River.

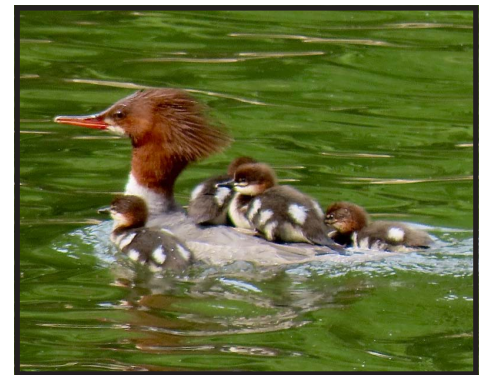
Addition: I have 2nd hand information from bikers on the Greenbrier River trail that the spoonbill was seen again today a few miles above and below Marlinton.

– Jack O'Connell, Greenbrier Co., WV, 7/20/23

– **Sightings taken from
WVBird ListServ**



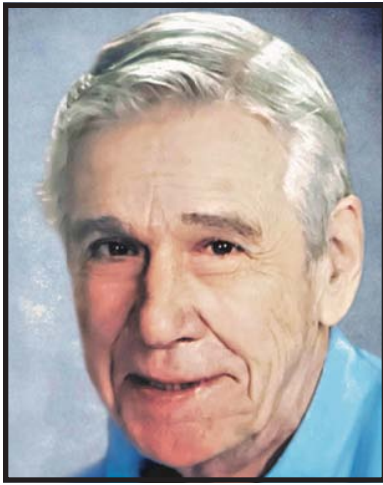
Clay-colored Sparrow
- photo by Aaron Graham



Mama Common Merganser and babies -
photo by Rick Gregg



Dickcissel on Hogueland Lane, Grant
County, WV - photo by Cynthia Mullens



PHIL WHEELER PASSES

Philip Powell Wheeler, age 93, of Millsboro, DE, passed away on Sunday, July 23, 2023, at Cadia Renaissance Rehabilitation Center in Millsboro. He was born on October 29, 1929, in Rowlesburg, WV, son of the late Charles M. Sr. and Olive (Powell) Wheeler.

Philip graduated with honors from Rowlesburg High School, Class of 1947, after which he enlisted in the U.S. Army. He attended X-Ray technician school at Fort Sam Houston, TX, then was assigned to Fitzsimmons Army Hospital in Aurora, CO, until 1949. Philip enrolled in West Virginia University that year to study for-

estry and during summers worked in the San Diego area. He enrolled in the Franklin School of Arts & Sciences in Philadelphia, PA in 1951, graduating in 1952, then began work at Hahnemann University Hospital. Philip married June A. Herman in 1953, and the couple moved to Wheeling, WV in 1954, at which time he began working for Ohio Valley General Hospital.

He joined Alcoholics Anonymous in 1973 and served the organization for many years, helping countless others well into his retirement. Philip retired from Ohio Valley Medical Center in 1990 as Director of Radiological and Physician Service – and began an ongoing annual series of winter stays in the Corpus Christi, TX area. He relocated to southern Delaware in 2004, lived in The Peninsula neighborhood of Millsboro, and was a member of the Grace United Methodist Church.

Philip was an avid outdoorsman, who relished the planning of many family camping, fishing, and other vacation trips. A talented gardener, his green thumb was evidenced by his beautifully landscaped yard and gardens. Philip had a lifelong passion for antiques and in his retirement also pursued birding, countless hours of family genealogy, and international travel. Above all of this, he was a family man. Philip cherished time spent with those he held most dear, unwaveringly supporting his children and grandchildren in all of their athletic accomplishments. A loving and devoted husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, and friend, he will be deeply missed by everyone who had the good fortune to know him.

In addition to his parents, Philip was preceded in death by his brothers: Charles Wheeler, Jr. and Herbert Haynes Wheeler (Bonnie); and his sister, Nancy Wheeler. He is survived by his beloved wife, June Wheeler; his son, Stephen Wheeler; his daughter, Valerie Ellenberger (Walt); his grandchildren: Emily Ellenberger (Heath Seng), Natalie Hill (Joe), Sarah Knight, Madeline Ellenberger (Colter Krebill), and Andrew Wheeler; and his great – grand – children: Graham Hill and Lucy Seng.

GARDENING IS FOR THE BIRDS... (cont. from page 5)

the Ravine Salamanders go deep before removing their cover. I get to delay all that cleanup—a win-win.

We really have seen the benefit of gardening this way as we watch towhees, wrens, thrushes, thrashers, robins, and other species flip leaves about, looking for tasty morsels. One day John called me to the kitchen window to watch a ripple of leaves progressing along the drainage ditch at the base of the rock wall. A robin's head popped up through the leaves. It soon located a worm in the moist, protected floor of the ditch.

In gardening for the birds, we have benefited from the beauty of the plants in the yard and also from the creatures that are attracted here. Changing our view about what looks “nice” in a garden has expanded our ability to provide a haven for wildlife.

CORRESPONDENCE

The article by Yan Tomazin in the recent issue of the Mail Bag is one of the sweetest most thoughtful things I've ever read. Yan is a marvel.

– Greg Eddy, Fairfax, VA

MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON FALL FIELD TRIPS

All Mountaineer Audubon field trips are free and open to anyone who is interested in attending. No birding experience is required, but a pair of binoculars will help. If you have questions about any trips, please contact Field Trip coordinator Katie Fallon: katie@acawv.org.

October 1, 10am: Young Birders Walk, West Virginia Botanic Garden. Young birders of all ages are welcome to join us on this flat, slow-paced walk on the garden's trails. Register in advance: www.wvbg.org.

October 7, 12pm: Cooper's Rock State Forest. Join Katie Fallon on the main overlook at Cooper's Rock to watch for migrating raptors. This will be a “sit” rather than a walk. All ages welcome. This event will be cancelled or rescheduled in the case of pouring rain; please check our Facebook page for updates.

October 6 & November 2, 6:30am-9:30am: WVU Core Arboretum, public bird banding demonstration. Join Mountaineer Audubon Vice President Dr. Chris Rota and his students in the WVU Core Arboretum along the Rail Trail, near the powerline cut. Bird banding will begin at sunrise and continue for about three hours -- stop by any time. Please note that banding will be cancelled if rain is forecasted. Cancellations will be announced on Mountaineer Audubon's Facebook, as will the rescheduled date, if applicable.

October 28, 8:30 am: Friendship Hill National Historic Site, 223 New Geneva Road, Point Marion, PA. Meet at the trailhead parking lot, about one tenth of a mile on the right, after turning off the main road. The field trip will walk on well-maintained trails through meadow and forest habitat. Leaders: Jane and Alan Clark.

EASTERN SHORE TRIP 2023

NOVEMBER 8th-12th

What an adventure in store for you this year! Things have really been shaken up. It will be a new trip for all of us. Wednesday November 8th we will meet in our overnight accommodations in Maryland. After our included breakfast, we will leave the hotel with all of our belongings and go to Conowingo Dam to observe the majestic display of Eagles until we have had our fill. Wednesday Lunch will be on your own) We will then head to a place we have not had the opportunity to stay for quite a few years. Cape May! Your room will be awaiting you when you arrive. Friday, Saturday, & Sunday mornings Continental Breakfast is included. As usual dinner will be on your own every night. The hotel has offered to provide bag lunches for us this year. I am going to keep that the same as in the last couple of years. (optional, for an additional fee if you are more comfortable you may choose to bring your own.) The schedule will be pretty flexible but the idea will be to one day go to Barnegat light, and one day poke around Cape May. Sunday morning go over the bird list, say our good-byes and drive safely home remembering all the fun we have had with each other.

Price includes Wed., Thurs., Fri., and Sat. night's lodging (2 per room); Thurs., Fri., Sat., and Sun. Morning Breakfast; Lunch can be provided if you request one in advance at the additional cost. A full itinerary will be sent to everyone who signs up.

DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS – OCTOBER 30, 2023

Make Checks payable to Cindy Slater and send along with your reservation to
125 North Center Street, Bridgeport WV, 26330

=====please cut here and return=====

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL. NO. _____ Name of person sharing room _____

(2 people per room. I will assign roommates this year, so you will need to let me know if you already have a roommate in mind and whom that person will be; otherwise, a single room supplement rate may apply.)

Are you interested in lunch or will you be bringing your own? _____

_____ Per Person Rate with roommate \$450.00 \$ _____

_____ Per Person Rate with No Roommate \$900.00 \$ _____

_____ Per Person Lunches add \$75.00 \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

BROOKS BIRD CLUB FALL WEEKEND RESERVATION FORM

CHIEF LOGAN STATE PARK, LOGAN, WV – OCTOBER 20-22, 2023

The Brooks Bird Club Inc. will host the fall meeting at Chief Logan State Park. This site was chosen as the Bird Club has never visited Chief Logan State Park and with the fall colors it was thought to be very fitting that this should be another new place for us to visit.

Reservations include Friday night lodging, dinner, & program; Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner, all day trip, evening program and lodging; and Sunday breakfast. At 9:30 AM, the BBC will hold its annual membership meeting before everyone packs up and travels safely home. A full schedule of events will be available closer to the actual date.

There will be a Board of Trustees meeting Friday at 2 PM (Board members only).

DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS IS SEPTEMBER 29, 2023

Make checks payable to Brooks Bird Club, Inc. and mail to:

Cindy Slater - 125 North Center Street Bridgeport WV 26330

Tel: 724-570-8502

Email: Mountaingirl127@gmail.com

or use the BBC website.

You must be a BROOKS BIRD CLUB MEMBER TO ATTEND any of the weekend events.

PLEASE CONTACT CINDY IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL. NO. _____ EMAIL _____

Name of person sharing room _____

(2 people per room) If you need a roommate, we'll get you one. Roommate will be assigned if no preference given

COMPLETE WEEKEND: _____ No. Attending @ \$200.00 Double Occupancy \$ _____

_____ Single Room Supplement @ \$400.00 \$ _____

_____ Alternate Reservations @ \$90.00 \$ _____

(No Lodging, Breakfasts or Lunch)

TOTAL \$ _____



...

Oh, the West Virginia hills

The views at the Tucker County Foray were always wonderful.

Read participant reports on pages 3-4 and see more photos.

Photo by Ryan Tomazin.

WHAT'S INSIDE

| | |
|--|------|
| Editor's Note/Message From Our President | 1 |
| Helen Wylie Passes | 2 |
| 2023 Tucker County Foray Daily Reports | 3-4 |
| Gardening Is For The Birds...And Others..... | 5, 9 |
| Morgantown Birding Cup Results..... | 6 |
| Changes In Contact Information..... | 6-7 |
| Chapter Happenings | 7 |
| Nature Happenings..... | 7 |
| Interesting Sightings Around The State..... | 8 |
| Phil Wheeler Passes | 9 |
| Correspondence | 9 |
| Mountaineer Audubon Fall Field Trips..... | 9 |
| 2023 Eastern Shore Trip Registration Form..... | 10 |
| 2023 BBC Fall Weekend Registration Form | 11 |