



THE MAIL BAG

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

VOL. 80, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2023 RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Message from your President & Mail Bag Editor

As I meditate over what to write, I fall back to numbers. This might be the 58th Editor's Message I've written. The Mail Bag has existed for 80 years now, and somehow I've been editor for over 18% of them, something I never fathomed. The club has seen thousands of members in that time, had over 80 Forays, published innumerable scientific papers in *The Redstart*. And still, we attempt to grow and to move forward in some new ways of thinking, bolstered

by the lessons of the past. In this issue, Rodney Bartgis has written two articles on how the BBC is viewed, how it might grow, and how that growth might be represented in our actions. There is a lot to learn from the information he has collected and from what our Steering Committee and Board are planning to do with it.



I hope everyone that can will be participating in Christmas Bird Counts, feeder counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and whatever else possible to contribute to the avian data sets at Cornell, Audubon, iNaturalist, eBird and more. Keep an eye out for rarities, as we know any bird can show up these days! Keep educated, and keep educating! Cheers!



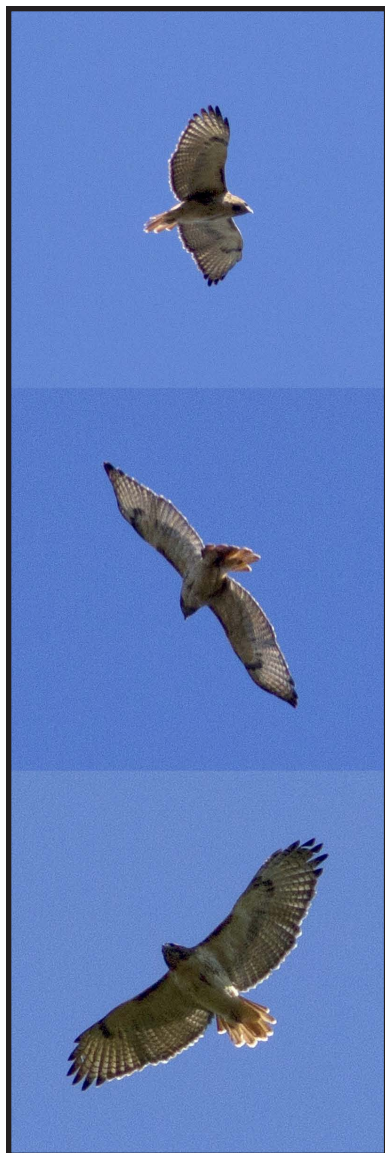
– Ryan Tomazin

Save the Date!
Register soon
to reserve a spot
March 8-10, 2024
BBC Early Spring Meeting at
North Bend State Park

(Left) Study of a Red-Tailed Hawk in Chief Logan State Park - photos by Ed.



A nice series of photos from this year's Tucker County Foray, contributed by Dan Dellatore.



2023-2024 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Athens/Princeton

TBA - contact Ron or check the website
Ron Canterbury - 513-556-9570
ron.canterbury@uc.edu

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

Sunday, December 17, 2023
Larry Helgerman - 304-242-8562

Canaan/Tucker Co.

Sunday, December 17, 2023
Casey Rucker - 304-866-4004
autoblock@frontiernet.net

Charles Town

Sunday, December 17, 2023
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
dean8189@gmail.com

Charleston

Saturday, December 16, 2023
Doren Burrell - 304-553-8592
g.immer@doren.net

Elkins Area

TBA - contact Rich or check the website
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Franklin/Pendleton County

Tuesday, December 19, 2023
Fred Atwood - 703-242-1675
fredatwood@yahoo.com

Hampshire County

Saturday, December 30, 2023
David Malakoff - 703-851-2206
hampshirebirdcount@gmail.com

Huntington

Saturday, December 23, 2023
David Patick - 304-633-4450
patick@comcast.net

Inwood

Friday, January 5, 2024
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
dean8189@gmail.com

Lewisburg

Saturday, December 30, 2023
Benjamin Handley
304-646-0602 - ben@potteryvalley.com

McDowell County

Wednesday, December 20, 2023
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Moorefield

TBA - contact them or check the website
Kyle Rambo - 301-757-0005
Darrell Good - 681-432-0021
kerambo@gmail.com

Morgantown

Saturday, December 16, 2023
Derek Courtney - 304-841-1015
derek.dana.courtney@gmail.com

Oak Hill

Saturday, December 16, 2023
Rachel Davis - 304-880-8059

Ona

Saturday, December 16, 2023
David Patick - 304-633-4450

Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 16, 2023
Richard Esker - eskerrb@gmail.com

Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 16, 2023
Jim Phillips - 304-466-1275
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

Pocahontas County

TBA - contact Rich or check the website
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Point Pleasant

TBA - contact Josh or check the website
Josh Holland - jhollandua@gmail.com
304-675-0981

Raleigh County

Sunday, December 17, 2023
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Tygart Lake

Wednesday, December 27, 2023
Matt McKinney - mckinneymi@ab.edu
Ross Brittain - rossalanbrittain@gmail.com

Wheeling

Wednesday, December 20, 2023
Molly Haywood - 860-910-6916

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 BBC FALL MEETING REPORTS - CHIEF LOGAN STATE PARK

Friday, Oct. 18, 2023

The Board members of the Brooks Bird Club met at Chief Logan State Park on Friday afternoon, October 20, 2023 to conduct the business of the club. Other members of the club arrived later, and all convened for dinner in the Lodge dining room.

Following dinner all met together to hear Lauren Cole, former Naturalist and current Asst. Superintendent of the Park, speak on the Elk Management Program with which the park is currently assisting. After a very informative and fun program, members socialized before heading off to rest for an active day on Saturday.

- **Janice Emrick**

Saturday, Oct. 19, 2023

Saturday's daylong tour started off with seven or so cars and headed to our first stop, Dingess tunnel. There is lots of fascinating history about the Dingess Tunnel. Also known as the bloody tunnel (google it), it was originally built by Italian immigrants for the railroad and it is now a one lane tunnel approximately one-half mile long. It is the main highway in and out of the community of Dingess.

About three miles south of Dingess Tunnel we stopped at a lake and boat launch to stretch our legs and do a little birding. Here we met two mallards and a friendly pooch.

After leaving the lake we went to Williamson, WV where we toured the "Coal House" made of 65 tons of coal with walls being nearly two feet thick... a house made entirely of coal. Williamson was also having a small business day so the group switched from nature to shopping and did a quick trip to the "mall" perusing local arts and crafts.

We headed on to the old train depot in Matewan for a lunch stop but got detoured through Kentucky to get there. Lunch was nice with the added experience of listening to the loud roar of ATV's traveling everywhere in town. That's the sound of economic prosperity, thanks to the Hatfield and McCoy trail system.

After lunch we went to the Mine War Museum in Matewan. Usually it is a walking tour at your own pace but the lone staff person overseeing the facility sensed our need to make haste so he gave a "private" tour and gave an excellent history lesson on the mine wars and local mystique...much of which shaped the labor movement for the rest of America in the early 20th Century. It was a very educational visit and a very fine museum... Recommended for anyone visiting southern WV! By the end of the day we had gotten a great history lesson about Sid Hatfield, saw some wonderful birds including a bald eagle, and spent time with great people.

- **Ashton Berdine**

Saturday, Oct. 19 - Alternate Trip

Allen and Mindy Waldron, Alma Lowry and myself had a slower birding day around Chief Logan State Park. While we only pulled 31 species of birds in our travels, we did have good experiences with White-throated Sparrows, mockingbirds; Cooper's, Sharp-shinned and

Red-Tailed hawks; a Blue-headed Vireo and Yellow-rumps.

Sunday, Oct. 20, 2023

Seven of us woke up a few hours before dawn to take a trip to the local elk preserve with Lauren Cole. After a ride on some of the rockier roads you'll see in the region, we stopped at a spot to look for the first elk. Two bulls (pictured below) were hiding in a little swale, but we found them when we moved around to a higher vantage point. After driving a little further up the road, we had more elk that were a mile or two away on mountaintop removal site. Rodney Bartgis and I heard siskins and pipits at this spot.

We returned to the lodge to prepare for the membership meeting ('breakfast' was provided for the elk crew before we'd left), and the meeting ensued. Most importantly, the new Steering Committee presented the new BBC mission statement, discussed in more detail on page 4.

So ended another productive series of meetings and field trips. See you at North Bend in March!

- **Ryan Tomazin**



The intrepid early morning elk watchers. (l to r) Beth Mankins, Allen Waldron, Ryan Tomazin, Mindy Waldron, Rodney Bartgis, Cindy Slater and Ashton Berdine.

- photo by Lauren Cole (inset photo of bull elk by R. Tomazin)

BOARD ADOPTS MISSION STATEMENT FOR BROOKS BIRD CLUB - both articles by Rodney Bartgis

At the fall 2023 board meeting the board of the Brooks Bird Club adopted a Mission Statement for the organization. Although there have been informal statements of purpose, this is the first time the board has adopted a Mission Statement for the Club.

The board created a Strategic Planning Committee at its fall 2022 meeting. For additional information on the committee and its work, see “What People Tell Us About Birding in West Virginia and BBC” elsewhere in this Mailbag. At the fall 2023 meeting, the committee recommended the board adopt a Mission Statement to guide the organization’s work. The committee provided background information and a strawman statement based on language from a past BBC brochure. After much spirited discussion and wordsmithing back and forth, a Mission Statement was finally adopted. But before the statement is revealed, a brief look at why one was felt needed.

One of the typical duties of any board of a non-profit organization is to adopt a Mission Statement to guide it. A mission statement expresses an organization’s purpose and how it plans to serve its constituents. It is a fundamental guide that shapes the organization’s direction. Boards refer to the mission statement when making important decisions to help them stay mission-focused. A good mission statement’s meaning should be clear the first time anyone reads it, with common language that everyone understands, avoiding jargon or buzzwords.

That sounds simple enough, but in reality, it isn’t. Every BBC member has an opinion of what the Club is and isn’t. Sometimes two people can have very different opinions on the matter, each thinking theirs is supported by the club’s history. That was found to be quite true in the board’s discussion. For example, was the Club interested primarily just in birds or all aspects of nature? There seemed to be as many different opinions about that simple question as there are board members!

Finally, the board reached consensus. Foremost, we promote the study and enjoyment of birds and all nature. We emphasize birds first because so much of our interest and research as an organization has been on birds. However, BBC has a history of looking broadly at nature. We are not “just a bird club”. At forays, field trips, and meetings we often look at plants, herps, insects, and other aspects of nature and BBC members tend to be as interested in the non-birds as much as the birds. Even at the Allegheny Front banding station on Dolly Sods there have been monarch butterfly tagging and dragonfly counts.

We stress the enjoyment of birds and nature that comes not just from our personal experiences with nature, but from sharing experiences with others, as well as learning from others. As much as enjoying nature, the Club also seeks to conserve it and use the collective knowledge of its members to teach others, to share our knowledge and to pass on to others what we have been fortunate to learn. And we will continue our scientific studies and research, be it point counts at foray and banding at Dolly Sods, or new endeavors. As members, our interest in birds and nature may not be bound by West Virginia, but as an organization we chose to focus our studies here because there is such a great need to learn more about the wonderful living world of the Mountain State.

With that perspective, the Brooks Bird Club has a Mission Statement:
The Brooks Bird Club promotes the study and enjoyment of birds and all nature. It provides information on environmental issues; promotes education, knowledge, and conservation of our natural heritage; and undertakes studies in West Virginia that have lasting scientific value.

WHAT PEOPLE TELL US ABOUT BIRDING IN WEST VIRGINIA AND BBC

At its 2022 fall meeting, the board of the Brooks Bird Club established a Strategic Planning Committee. The committee’s charter directs it to develop recommendations to the board for enhancing the Club’s research, outreach/education, and membership activities. A lot has changed since the Club’s founding over 90 years ago. How people communicate, learn about birds, build birding skills, and spend time in nature has changed dramatically. It is now much easier to travel across our rugged state and areas once poorly known by birders are often now among the best known. People’s schedules have changed and extended periods off in the summer are no longer an option for many academics and students. Technology has provided tools and aids unimagined by most just 30 years ago. Citizen science projects engage thousands in West Virginia each year. The interest in birding has greatly increased in recent years, especially during the height of the pandemic, while participation in organized clubs has tended to decline. At a time when BBC membership stands at about 300, over 11,000 birders have submitted West Virginia records to eBird and Mountain State Birders has 2,500 members on Facebook. The board wants to understand how can the Brooks Bird Club continue to play a role in the birding community in West Virginia and what should that role be?

The committee consists of Rodney Bartgis (chair), Ashton Berdine, Christine Jones, Kelly Schetselaar (Vice Chair), Juanita Slater, and Ryan Tomazin. At the 2023 fall board meeting, the committee reported to the board on two of its activities. One, recommending the board adopt a Mission Statement for the Club, is described elsewhere in this Mailbag. The other was mentioning the committee’s reaching out to others to gain insights on how BBC members and others in West Virginia’s birding community look at birding, nature, and the role of

BBC today. The committee did not want to be constrained by our own experiences and ideas, especially since we are “insiders” that may have biased views that limit our thinking.

To give us that larger perspective, we reached out to selected people in five groups: people active in the Club (“BBCers”), those active in the state’s birding community but not active in the Club (“Non-BBCers”), birders under 30 active in the state’s birding community (“Youth”), professionals, and leaders in similar organizations. Note that what we call “Non-BBCers” can include people who are BBC members but who do not regularly participate in Club activities and Youth can be either Club members or non-members. This was not a scientific poll so caution is appropriate when interpreting responses. But since our goal was to get input from people whose judgement we were especially interested in, trends and patterns can be helpful to understand.

We asked questions about 1) how people bird and appreciate nature, participate in the Club, and see BBC and its role, and 2) what they see as the Club’s strengths and weaknesses and what they would recommend the Club consider for its future. Here, we take a look at the first set of questions and will look at the second set in a future Mailbag. For the first set, the responses of three groups are most helpful: BBCers (20 people), Non-BBCers (12 people), and Youth (5).

All three groups birded frequently, especially alone or with family members. Both BBCers and Youth birded regularly in small groups of friends (at least once a month for all in both groups), with Youth more frequently. BBCers tended to bird more frequently in organized groups at least once a month (75%) than Youth (40%) and Non-BBCers (42%). BBCers tended to travel less overnight to bird, either with family and friends or in an organized group and surprisingly, Youth were the most likely to travel overnight in a group of others besides family and friends during the year (60% vs 35% BBCers, 33% Non-BBCers).

All groups regularly participated (90-100%) in birding locally and in-state and out-of-state birding travel. Non-BBCers and Youth were more into bird photography (75-80%) than BBCers (10%), feeding birds (80-92% vs. 55% for BBCers) and eBirding (75-100% vs 45%). Notably, Youth were much more likely to be involved in bird banding (80%) than either BBCers (25%) or Non-BBCers (33%).

All groups felt that viewing and enjoying birds in natural surroundings was very important (100% for all), as was the conservation of birds and bird habitats (90 to 100%). All tended to have a moderate interest in encouraging and mentoring others in enjoying birds. Youth thought it very important (100%) to encourage birding as a broader economic asset such as with birding festivals, ecotourism and formal birding trails) but BBCers and Non-BBCers showed more moderate levels of support. Youth and BBCers also generally ranked as very important (100% Youth, 65% BBCers), citizen science (iNaturalist, BBC point counts, breeding bird atlas, etc...), with Non-BBCers somewhat less so (42%).

There were notable differences among groups in how they primarily learned about birds and birding in West Virginia, with the exception that a high percentage (at least 80%) of all groups learned from their friends. Local Audubon chapters and the WV ListServ were moderate sources (40-60%) of information across all three groups. BBCers reported learning from the Mailbag and Redstart (80%) but not Non-BBCers (33%) and Youth (20%). There was a similar pattern with the BBC Website, with 65% of BBCers considering it a primary information source but not Non-BBCers (16%) and Youth (20%). The BBC Facebook site was a source for 55% of BBCers, but only 33% of Non-BBCers and 20% of Youth. In contrast, the Mountain State Birders Facebook site was a source for 75% of Non-BBCers and 100% of Youth, but only 15% of BBCers. Other digital/internet sources showed a similar contrast. Ebird was a primary source for 55% of BBCers, but 83% of Non-BBCers and 100% of Youth. A strong difference is reflected in GroupMe Chat groups, a primary source for Non-BBCers (91%) and Youth (100%) but not BBCers (20%).

Basically, we see that all three communities are active, engaged birders but there is a strong difference in the use of technology by BBCers and Non-BBCers or Youth. There also are strong differences in use of the Club’s information sources (such as its Website and publications) by BBCers and Non-BBCers or Youth.

When asked about potential roles for BBC, all groups strongly felt that BBC should be sharing knowledge about birds and bird habitats, supporting and engaging in citizen science projects, supporting conservation of birds and bird habitats, and encouraging/mentoring others in enjoying birds by promoting birding skills and ornithological knowledge. BBCers generally felt that it was only somewhat important for the Club to support research by professionals and academics, whereas Non-BBCers and especially Youth thought that to be very important. A real difference surfaced where 70% of BBCers thought it very important that BBC should be sharing knowledge and information about nature generally, but only 42% of Non-BBCers thought that very important and Youth thought it only somewhat important for the Club. All groups thought it very important for the Club to share knowledge and information “in the field”, but only thought it somewhat important to do so in meetings and conferences (with a little more support to do so by BBCers). All three groups generally thought it very important for BBC to share information online, but only somewhat important to do so in printed formats (again, with a little bit more interest in printed format by BBCers.) A majority in all three groups thought it very important that BBC should serve as a public voice for the birding community in West Virginia. A majority in all three groups thought it at least somewhat important that the Club encourage activities such as birding festivals, ecotourism and formal birding trails, but only Youth tended to think that was a very important role for BBC.

In summary, there was strong agreement that the Club be involved in out-

(cont. on Page 6)

BBC BONUS BIRDING WEEKEND AT TERRA ALTA

Contributed by Cindy Slater and others

In Blister Swamp, at the end of July with the West Virginia Native Plant Society, a friend suggested that we resurrect the BBC Bonus Bird Weekend, and so it was that on Labor Day weekend in Terra Alta, we had nine full time, six part time for a total of fifteen participants. Oglebay Institute was kind enough to let us rent their camp on short notice. We were also able to contribute to the Helen Wylie Scholarship Fund. It was a compact fun filled weekend with forty-five species of birds, a multitude of plants inspected, good conversations and, of course, ice cream! Enjoy reading what some of the participants had to say in the following comments.

Most Memorable Experiences

- PJ taught us an Irish Toast: May you have a long life and a happy one, a quick death and a painless one, a good drink and another one! Cheers!
- Birds were few, plants were interesting, company was enjoyed as relationships were re-established and overall enjoyment was pervasive.
- Heard Sandhill Cranes calling in Cranesville Swamp.
- Cindy found the heather on A-Frame Road
- Roasted vegetables made a great dinner.
- Fantastic weekend with great friends. Will return again, GREAT FOOD!!!
- My first visit to Terra Alta since July 4th week 1971. 52 years was too long to be away! It was great to rest and meet new people. I am looking forward to the next outing.
– Ben
- Enjoyed everyone helping me ID plants! I know some birds, plants not so much :)
- Loved falling asleep at ole TA with the owls calling and the beautiful view of the lake! Fabulous moments, found Dolls Eyes, call of the crane, and spending time with wonderful friends.
- I loved falling asleep with owl calls in my ears, and waking to the sound of migrating warblers and Canada Geese on the lake. It's always more the people than the activities but the activities are always spectacular.
- I enjoyed sleeping in a tent again experiencing all of the things one misses staying in the lodges or cabins. I missed hearing the owls and nightlife and seeing the stars.
– Mary S.
- I enjoyed meeting everyone plus seeing the narrow-leaved gentians. – John
- I had a fun time seeing old friends and going to our favorite spots in a different season, as well as exploring new places as a group. The group has vast collective knowledge over a wide range of disciplines, all complementing each other. The caramel-filled marshmallows were a huge hit!!! – Keith

WHAT PEOPLE TELL US ABOUT BIRDING IN WEST VIRGINIA AND BBC *(cont. from Page 5)*

reach and information sharing around birds, their habitats, and conservation, as well as mentoring and encouraging birding skills and knowledge and promoting citizen science. There is strong interest in seeing BBC share its knowledge and provide learning opportunities in both the field and online. Reflecting patterns elsewhere, the interest in doing so in meetings and in print is not as strong (but neither is it dead). There is an interest in seeing the Club be a voice for the birding community in West Virginia, probably reflecting that there is no other organized statewide structure to do so. And the Club membership believes it is very important for the Club to share knowledge about nature beyond just birds, but others believe less so. This probably reflects that those close to BBC have experiences with the Club supporting plant and fauna studies and programs and value those experiences, while others tend to see BBC only as a “Bird Club”.

Again, this was not a scientific poll and caution is urged in interpreting the findings. However, this is information that can help “round out” the perspectives of committee and board members as we think about the future work of the Club. At the annual Fall membership meeting, members shared their thoughts on some key strategic planning questions in break-out sessions. We also wish to hear other thoughts from interested parties. If you'd like to share some thoughts on the future of the Club's research, outreach/education, and membership activities, feel free to email them to rodbartgjs@gmail.com.



2023 EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT

Written by committee: Jil Swearingen, Sara Creamer, and Warren Steiner.

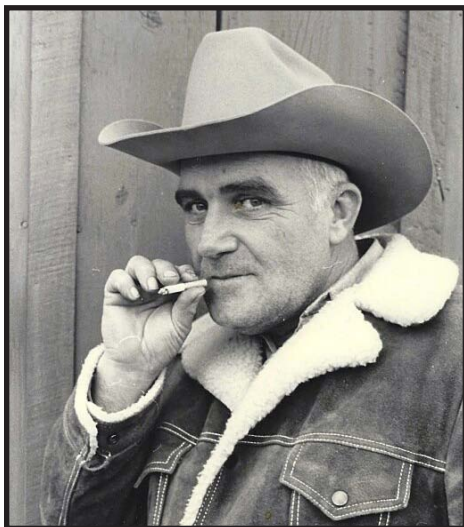
The 2023 Eastern Shore Bird Blitz ran from the morning of Thursday November 9 through early Sunday morning November 12. Fifteen hardy souls included Cynthia Slater (Fearless Leader), Ashton Berdine (Fearless Leader Assistant), Greg Eddy, Barbara Stocker, Michael Jones, Philip Murray, Amy Wallace, Neal and Barbara Hohman, Sara and Don Creamer, Mary and Ken Schilstra, Warren Steiner and Jil Swearingen.

We gathered on Wednesday evening at the Best Western in North East Maryland, which is Southeast of Conowingo, Maryland, and Northwest of Cape May, New Jersey. Got it? After a generous continental breakfast early Thursday morning, we checked out and got a move on to the Conowingo Dam. The drive along Susquehanna River Road was delightful, with colorful foliage glowing from the morning sunlight. We passed through the small historic town of Port Deposit before reaching Conowingo, at which point we crossed the river on the dam to our birding destination, Conowingo Fisherman's Park.

We arrived at the park around 10am and were greeted with an abundance of immature and adult bald eagles screeching and swooping (and some playing footsies), kettles of black vultures, and swirls of cormorants and gulls fishing just below the spillway. The weather was clear and comfortable and we ate our lunches together before heading off to Cape May. The drive to Cape May was long but the nice weather and beautiful fall foliage helped. We went directly to Cape May Lighthouse for some late afternoon birding and were treated to a gorgeous sunset which was really good considering what Friday brought.

After Friday breakfast, we drove to Barnegat Lighthouse State Park and spent a few wet hours birding from the pier before heading south to the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Thankfully, the steady rain let up in time for the wildlife loop drive. We returned to Cape May after dark. On Saturday morning, under clear skies, we returned to Cape May Lighthouse and then made local stops at Cape May Bird Observatory gift shop, Higbee Beach (across the channel from the ferry), and The Nature Conservancy's South Cape May Meadows. After lunch, we drove to Hereford Inlet Lighthouse where we walked the seawall and watched American oystercatchers imitating gulls as they rested on a slowly retreating sandbar. A lone Black-bellied Plover taunted us from a nearby sandbar. Our final stop of the day was The Wetlands Institute in Stone Harbor, where we birded on the grounds for about an hour.

A total of 85 species were observed during the trip.



MALVERN CAMPBELL PASSES

Malvern Gene Campbell, 81, of Bethesda passed away on November 28, 2023. He was born on March 29, 1942 on Sandy Ridge in Barnesville, Ohio to the late Walter B. and Grace Isabelle (Edie) Campbell.

Malvern served in the US Marine Corps. He worked in Construction, at three coal mines, and with Goshen Twp. Highway maintenance. Malvern loved cars, horses, and heavy machinery. He enjoyed tinkering and flea markets. He will be missed by family, friends, and his favorite dog, Snicky.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by an older brother, Larry James Campbell; and sister, Virginia Blackledge.

He was survived by his beloved wife of 63 years, Rosemary (Mead) Campbell; son, Malvern George Campbell; daughter, Carla (Bruce) Long; two brothers, William and Robert Campbell; grandson, Drue (Morgan) Long; granddaughter, Sarah Long; great-grandchildren, Olivia Morris, Abel Jones; plus many nieces and nephews.

Haikus (Jil)

daredevil divers
perform for a hundred eyes
feathers chasing fins

eagles, cormorants
wings over Conowingo
Dam, isn't life great?

red orange and gold
glowing and falling around
autumn confetti

lunch by the river
no need to hurry today
time to reconnect

Haikus (Warren)

at Conowingo
cormorant, gulls and eagle
but no flamingo

sand between the toes
at the cape may make all birds
be a sanderling

if its bill holds more
than its belly can how can
the pelican fly?

birds and birders flock
to Barnegat in spite of
the cold windy rain

scoters are motors
deeply parting the waters
as fishers of hen

native wild turkeys
don't celebrate Thanksgiving
but run to live free

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

As soon as I arrived at Lake Sherwood this morning, I heard the distinctive chirping of Red Crossbills! I spent the next hour or so trying to find and photograph them in the upper reaches of the pines in the “median” of the main parking lot. I also saw some getting grit in the parking lot and at the beach, but they didn’t linger and I just couldn’t get good shots. I was about to give up when I noticed that a few of them were frequenting one of those Forest Service heavy-duty grills. I went over to investigate and found that they were in the grill picking either ash or bits of charcoal! It was just like watching them at a feeder! Who knew???
– Jack O’Connell, Greenbrier Co., WV, 8/18/23

I’m settling into my new home in Canaan Valley, learning about my neighbors, including Red-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and Black-throated Blue Warblers — guys that are not around in the summer at my former home in Kanawha County. Hiking along the Blackwater River this morning, we were buzzed by a kingfisher, a sandpiper (too fast to ID), and a phoebe flycatching over the water. All were near an active beaver dam which is crossing the river — clearly an over achieving beaver! And very nice views of an adult Bald Eagle soaring over Davis. Lovely day in upper Tucker County.

– Laura Ceperley, Canaan Valley, WV, 8/22/23

We had around 70 Common Nighthawks feeding over the creeks in Elm Grove for about 45 minutes last night. Approximately 1,500 Chimney Swifts entered the local school chimney afterwards.

– Larry Helgerman, Wheeling WV, 8/25/23

I have seen and heard one/many Red-headed Woodpeckers almost every day for the last month and a half. I have never seen more than 4 adults at one time. An immature showed up about two weeks ago, and then about a week ago I saw two immatures at the same time, then a few days later I am 75% sure I saw three immatures at the same time.

A few days ago I was over at the nesting tree and saw six at one time. I assume there were 4 adults and two immatures but it was a quick blur of them out in front of me and didn’t have time to tell young from adults. On July 16 a photographer friend found the nest tree and got a boat load of pics, many of a sequence of mating. Seems late in the season for real conceiving; maybe they were just having nice memories of an earlier time.

It will be interesting to see if they stick around for another season or find a new location—for now they are around somewhere at some time every day, although less vocal now.

– Sam Chapman, Romney WV, 8/29/23

There was a Juvenile Red-headed Woodpecker on Beall Lane in Canaan Valley NWR. This morning it was going from telephone pole to telephone pole down the road.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 9/5/23

13 participants joined me for the Mountaineer Audubon field trip to Little Indian Creek this morning. The weather was beautiful for fall... after the fog burned off. Little Indian Creek continued to prove its mettle as a premier Connecticut Warbler viewing spot. Though this elusive skulker failed to give great views, two individuals were found. Otherwise, we were treated to a few nice waves of migrants with 19 warbler species tallied overall. Almost 60 species total were seen.

– Derek Courtney, Morgantown, WV, 9/16/23

A few afternoons ago there was a lot of bird activity in the volunteer spicebush out front. Seeing a Brown Thrasher tucked in the middle was a nice surprise. Other birds were bluebirds, cardinals, an unidentified warbler, a phoebe, and a smaller flycatcher. I wasn’t sure if the attraction was insects or berries. In retrospect, I should have used Merlin to get a list of all the birds. Might have identified that warbler. One neat thing was to see the flycatcher doing the loops. At one point it left the tree and with a white cloud in the background I was able to see it catch an insect before landing again.

This morning I actually saw a young bluebird toss back two spicebush berries. I have a good number of spicebush in my yard and they are loaded with berries this year. Since I don’t have any dogwood trees these are not a bad replacement. I remember last year seeing a huge flock of starlings descend on a neighbor’s yard and strip her lovely young dogwoods of all the berries. They might not do that with spicebush.

Hummingbirds have been a joy to watch. All three feeders are very busy as is the red salvia I have nearby. Tithonia, not a native I know, is another favorite of hummers, Monarchs and bumblebees. Part of the plant is in front of the window so I get a front row seat.



Blue Grosbeak, Greenbrier, WV
– photo by Jack O’Connell



Western Flycatcher, Poor House Farm Park
on 10/3/23 - photo by C. Wade Snyder

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

The weevils got into the last few gallons of sunflower chips so I've been putting it out on the tray to use it up. I've had the best time watching cardinals in their various stages of molt or plumage that the youngsters display. Such variety.

Just now there was a hummingbird perched on the edge of the birdbath, repeatedly dipping his face in the water. Haven't seen that for a while. The old concrete bowl of this pedestal bath is not pretty but is the right shape. Bees too can perch on the edge to get some water.

I often see a goldfinch drinking from the dripping hose. Don't know if it is always the same one. Can't say I blame him. Fresh water does seem more appealing.

– Bruni Haydl, Charles Town, WV, 9/16/23

Something in the yard woke me up at 2:27 a.m. I stepped out on porch with the spotlight. I immediately heard a Great Horned Owl to the north and a Barred Owl to the NW. A dog was barking near the GHOW. A skunk was feeding in the yard. In ten minutes, the GHOW called 10x and the BDOW 7x.

Then, 2 GHOWs (one called 5x, the other 10x) & the BDOW called 5x in 5 minutes. From 2:42 to 2:48, an adult GHOW called 4x and was joined by a young one that was to the west. The BDOW called 2x, and to our surprise a Northern Saw-whet Owl called 4x between the other owls. At 2:48, a young GHOW called 2x & moved toward the adults that called 3x. BDOW called 2x.

At 2:51, adult GHOWs called 6x, BDOW once. At 2:58, the BDOW called 9x, adult GHOWs called twice. From 3:14 to 3:26, no owls heard, one dog barking, and skunk still eating. With neighbors like this, who needs sleep!

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 10/6/23

This is an oddball occurrence. Just surprised a Wilson's Snipe that was in my Parsons vegetable garden. It has a net enclosure that is hard to see. The bird flew into it at least twice and was confused. Finally, it made it over the top.

– Mimi Kibler, Tucker County, WV, 10/8/23

There are two mature Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) on the property adjacent to our home in Morgantown, both planted in an ornamental garden. Those two trees are in heavy mast this season.

During the mornings of October 14, 15 and 16, these trees were visited by a flock of Red-winged Blackbirds, each numbering 10-15 individuals. The birds were foraging vigorously and singing their characteristically song as they fed on the seeds under the cone scales.

This foraging behavior - Red-winged Blackbirds on pine mast - is new to me. In addition to the spectacle of Red-wings foraging in trees, the cacophony of their song in trees was just as curious.

The various literature descriptions of Red-winged Blackbird foraging behavior that I have accessed mention seed foraging on grasses and low cover but not on pine cones or in mature trees.

– Larry Schwab, Morgantown, WV, 10/18/23

I also saw Red-wings and a couple Rusties foraging in white pine cones recently at Little Fork in Pendleton County. I believe this is also the first time I have observed this behavior.

Also on the topic of Red-wing foraging, recently I have seen flocks of Red-wings using "gaping behavior" to forage in cattail seed heads for insects at South Mill Creek lake in Grant Co. and Kimsey Run Lake in Hardy Co. Gaping behavior in *Birds of the World* is described as "forcibly opening the lower mandible against resistance....to expose insects hiding in the sheathing leaf bases of aquatic plants, under sticks, reeds, or other objects on the ground or on floating vegetation, and under stones in stream riffles." The pine cone foragers also appeared to be using this gaping behavior in the cones, I assume to extract the seeds.

– Fred Atwood, 10/18/23

– **Sightings taken from
WV Bird List Serv**

BOB WHITAKER, HUSBAND OF JANE WHITAKER, PASSES

Deacon Robert William Whitaker was born in St. Petersburg, Florida, on 28 June 1939, to Jesse William Whitaker and Eunice Josephine Whitaker nee Butler. He passed away on 30 September 2023 at the age of 84 years. He spent his formative childhood years in St. Petersburg raised alongside his best friend, Marty. He attended Duke University and graduated in 1961 earning a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics. During his time at Duke, he was actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Most notably, he was at the March on Washington in 1963 and witnessed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. give his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

After graduating in 1961, Robert relocated to Washington, DC, where he worked in the field of Computer Engineering as a Systems Analyst for 35 years before his retirement. In 1964, Robert met and married Jane Catherine Jones at Saint Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church. Deacon Whitaker and his wife settled in Washington, DC, where they were active in the community and church, (St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 2424 K Street), and raised four children, Susan, Matthew, Katie, and Peter.

During his active adulthood, Deacon Whitaker loved to bicycle and could often be seen touring Washington with his children. He loved to walk and when not working, Robert spent his days taking long walks around the city. He was fond of cats and the family always had an orange cat. He enjoyed camping and hiking with his wife and children and they enjoyed family excursions to the outdoors of West Virginia in the warm summer months.



CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

Mike Bergen
821 Richwood Ave.
Morgantown, WV 26505
Email: mikewvche@gmail.com
304-685-5353

Mollee Brown
487 Sine Pl.
Bruceton Mills, WV 26501
Email: molleembrown@gmail.com
304-290-1096

Vickie L. Crites
166 Cortland Cir.
Clear Brook, Va. 22624-1452

William "Mark" Elliott
720 Dawnridge Rd.
Princeton, WV 24739-6931
Email: erdoc501@aol.com
304-920-8811

Constance Farley
2130 Carrollton Rd.
Finksburg, MD 21048
constance.farley@montgomerycollege.edu
410-978-0242

Catherine & William Hallam
10074 Green Clover Dr.
Ellicott City, MD 21042
Email: canaanski@aol.com
410-294-7647

Katie Garst
114 Pleasant Ave.
Elkins, WV 26241
Email: k.garst20@gmail.com
304-621-5655

Jason & Family McCullough
520 S. Murtland St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15208
Email: jasonfmcullough@gmail.com
412-443-9145

Callie McMunigal
855 Old Spruce Rd.
Union, WV 24983
Email: luckybean15@gmail.com
304-994-0840

John Sayers
1700 E. 13th St., Apt. 18B
Cleveland, OH 44114
Email: johnsayers339@gmail.com
704-451-1207

Ben Schneider
9 Edgwood St.
Wheeling, WV 26003
Email: whg.photog@yahoo.com
304-780-6345

CHANGE IN ADDRESS

Exchange Centre for Scientific Literature
Kirkkokatu 6
00170 Helsinki/Finland

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

HANDLAN CHAPTER

Meetings at 6:30 PM at the South Charleston Library

January 8, 2024 – Tom Pauley presenting on herps.

February 12, 2024 – Laura Ceperley presenting on her Panama Canal trip.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

*December Coordinator: Lucine Wright
740-373-6230*

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

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.

January 9, 2024 – 7:00 pm. "Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock". Presented by Reina Tyl, a wildlife bi-

ologist with the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Tyl will discuss the population status of and primary issues affecting two "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" in Pennsylvania—the ruffed grouse and American woodcock. She will also talk about research being conducted to inform the management of these beloved species.

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.

January 6, 2024 – 5:00 pm: Owls of the Garden. Join Mountaineer Audubon and Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia for a winter owl walk. The program will begin with a short presentation featuring live owls from the ACCA followed by a walk in the WVBG in search of wild owls. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. Register in advance: www.wvbg.org.

CORRESPONDENCE

Erratum

"On Tuesday afternoon of June 6, 2023, 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."

– Dan & Mary Dellatorre
North Bethesda, Maryland



BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

MARCH 8-10, 2024

NORTH BEND STATE PARK

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

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.

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 February 3, 2024

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



•••

Fall Colors

The mountains outside of Chief Logan State Park Lodge were colorful and vast. See what the participants got up to there on Page 3.

Photo by Ryan Tomazin.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Editor's Note/Message From Our President	1
2023-24 WV Christmas Bird Counts	2
2023 BBC Fall Meeting Reports	3
BBC Board Adopts New Mission Statement	4
WV and BBC Birding Survey Report	4-6
Terra Alta Bonus Birding Weekend Report.....	6
2023 Eastern Shore Trip Report.....	7
Malvern Campbell Passes.....	7
Interesting Sightings Around The State.....	8-9
Bob Whitaker Passes.....	9
Changes In Contact Information.....	10
Chapter Happenings/Nature Happenings around the state..	10
Correspondence	10
2023 BBC Early Spring Meeting Registration Form	11