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The **REDSTART**

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JULY, 2016



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Contents	Page
The 2015 West Virginia Christmas Bird Count	
—Jane Whitaker	68
Valley Falls State Park Saw-whet Owl Banding Station for 2015	
—Joey Herron	77
Book Reviews	
—Albert R. Buckelew Jr.	81
Field Notes	
—Casey Rucker	83

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The 2015 West Virginia Christmas Bird Count

Jane Whitaker

There were 21 Christmas Bird Counts run in West Virginia from December 16, 2015, through January 4, 2016. The number of participants per count ranged from 4 in McDowell and Raleigh Counties to 39 in Wheeling, West Virginia, and Buffalo Creek, Pennsylvania (see Table 1). The Buffalo Creek count is reported here because much of its area is in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia. As observed in Table 1, the number of birds seen and the number of species seen were somewhat dependent on the number of observers.

Table 1

Location of Participating Counts, Total Species, Number of Birds, and Observers

Count Location	Species	Number	Obs.
Athens-Princeton, WV	51	1,707	6
Buffalo Creek	69	11,762	39
Canaan, WV	54	2,071	22
Charleston	59	14,188	21
Charles Town, WV	70	11,043	21
Elkins, WV	52	3,696	11
Hampshire County, WV	64	5,081	35
Huntington	68	6,324	22
Inwood, WV	61	4,914	20
Lewisburg, WV	57	8,446	17
McDowell County, WV	39	535	4
Moorefield, WV	57	2,393	10
Morgantown, WV	74	4,741	30
Oak Hill	32	603	7
Ona, WV	69	5,355	16
Parkersburg, WV	71	8,828	28
Pendleton, WV	62	5,918	9
Pipestem, WV	65	2,167	12
Pocahontas, WV	55	1,567	10
Raleigh County, WV	44	13,049	4
Wheeling, WV	62	40,770	39

All the counts reported fair, partly cloudy weather with average temperatures for their elevation locations. Table 2 is a list of species observed and the total number of each species seen. Large American Crow roosts were responsible for numbers reported over 10,000; however, Charles Town also reported over 5,000 Robins.

Table 2
Species List

Species	Number
Snow Goose	6
Ross's Goose*	1
Canada Goose	6,971
Mute Swan	42
Tundra Swan	54
Wood Duck	19
Gadwall	68
American Wigeon	8
American Black Duck	94
Mallard	1,843
Northern Pintail	7
Green-winged Teal	7
Redhead	2
Ring-necked Duck	43
Scaup sp.	5
Bufflehead	103
Common Goldeneye	3
Hooded Merganser	262
Common Merganser	88
Red-breasted Merganser	1
Ruddy Duck	9
Ring-necked Pheasant	12
Ruffed Grouse	5
Wild Turkey	551
Common Loon	3
Pied-billed Grebe	61
Double-crested Cormorant	25
American Bittern*	cw
Great Blue Heron	96
Great Egret*	cw

Species	Number
Black-crowned Night-Heron*	2
Black Vulture	786
Turkey Vulture	1,891
Bald Eagle	101
Northern Harrier	14
Sharp-shinned Hawk	22
Cooper's Hawk	36
Accipiter Species	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	114
Red-tailed Hawk	487
Rough-legged Hawk	4
Golden Eagle	13
American Coot	52
Killdeer	159
Wilson's Snipe	13
American Woodcock*	1
Laughing Gull	ew
Ring-billed Gull	359
Herring Gull	11
Rock Pigeon	4,684
Mourning Dove	2,876
Barn Owl	1
Eastern Screech-Owl	75
Great Horned Owl	21
Barred Owl	29
Northern Saw-whet Owl	4
Belted Kingfisher	72
Red-headed Woodpecker	11
Red-bellied Woodpecker	944
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	136
Downy Woodpecker	903
Hairy Woodpecker	185
Northern Flicker	419
Pileated Woodpecker	307
American Kestrel	145
Merlin	4
Peregrine Falcon	4
Eastern Phoebe	18
Loggerhead Shrike	1

Species	Number
Blue Jay	1,469
American Crow	59,428
Fish Crow	2
Common Raven	298
Horned Lark	9
Carolina Chickadee	2,222
Black-capped Chickadee	630
Chickadee sp.	223
Tufted Titmouse	2,328
Red-breasted Nuthatch	33
White-breasted Nuthatch	1,409
Brown Creeper	71
House Wren	3
Winter Wren	35
Carolina Wren	935
Golden-crowned Kinglet	325
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	14
Eastern Bluebird	1,828
Hermit Thrush	31
American Robin	5,225
Brown Thrasher	1
Northern Mockingbird	524
European Starling	29,852
American Pipit	6
Cedar Waxwing	1,282
Yellow-rumped Warbler	384
Common Yellowthroat	1
Eastern Towhee	547
American Tree Sparrow	234
Chipping Sparrow	40
Field Sparrow	207
Savannah Sparrow*	2
Fox Sparrow	39
Song Sparrow	1,617
Swamp Sparrow	99
White-throated Sparrow	1,549
White-crowned Sparrow	301
Sparrow sp.	18
Dark-eyed Junco	4,915

Species	Number
Northern Cardinal	2,446
Indigo Bunting*	1
Red-winged Blackbird	134
Eastern Meadowlark	11
Rusty Blackbird	23
Common Grackle	4
Brown-headed Cowbird	73
Purple Finch	50
House Finch	1,376
Red Crossbill*	8
Pine Siskin	602
Common Redpoll	1
American Goldfinch	1,700
Evening Grosbeak*	5
House Sparrow	2,684
Total	152,523

* denotes species not observed on the 2014 count
 cw denotes count week, but not on count day

Table 3 lists the most abundant birds reported in descending order. The House Finch (# 1,376) was the only species listed in Table 3 with fewer than 1,400 individuals seen. Last year the Carolina Wren was among the top 20 but as its numbers were down (from 1,402 to 935), it was replaced by the House Finch.

Table 3
 Twenty Most Abundant Species in Descending Order
 (numbering over 1,376 seen)

American Crow
 European Starling
 Canada Goose
 American Robin
 Dark-eyed Junco
 Rock Pigeon
 Chickadees (Carolina and Black-capped Chickadees combined)

Mourning Dove
 House Sparrow
 Northern Cardinal
 Tufted Titmouse
 Turkey Vulture
 Mallard
 Eastern Bluebird
 American Goldfinch
 Song Sparrow
 White-throated Sparrow
 Blue Jay
 White-breasted Nuthatch
 House Finch

Table 4 lists the 17 species observed on only one count. The Great Egret was seen during count week, December 19, by both Parkersburg and by Pipestem participants.

Table 4
 Species Observed on One Count Only

Species	Number	Count Location
Ross's Goose	1	Huntington
Mute Swan	2	Buffalo Creek
Red-breasted Merganser	1	Charles Town
Ring-necked Pheasant	12	Buffalo Creek
American Bittern	1	Canaan
Black-crowned Night-Heron	2	Parkersburg
American Woodcock	1	Charleston
Laughing Gull	cw	Pocahontas
Barn Owl	1	Moorefield
Loggerhead Shrike	2	Pocahontas
Marsh Wren	1	Pipestem
Brown Thrasher	1	Hampshire
Common Yellowthroat	1	Pendleton
Indigo Bunting	1	Huntington
Red Crossbill	8	Pocahontas
Common Redpoll	1	Buffalo Creek

There were 18 species seen on all counts and eight found on all but one, as seen in Table 5. In 2014 Hairy Woodpeckers, Eastern Towhees, and White-throated Sparrows were found on all counts. This year they were absent on some. The counts where the birds were absent on one count only are in parentheses after the bird. Canada Geese, Turkey Vultures, Rock Pigeons, and Northern Cardinals were among the most abundant birds observed, so possibly the small number of observers in McDowell and Oak Hill may have affected these counts. I have no explanation for the lack of observation of the other unreported species.

Table 5
Species Observed on All Counts

Canada Goose* (McDowell)
Mallard
Turkey Vulture* (Canaan)
Red-shouldered Hawk* (Buffalo Creek)
Red-tailed Hawk
Rock Pigeon* (Oak Hill)
Mourning Dove
Red-bellied Woodpecker* (McDowell)
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker* (Elkins)
Blue Jay
American Crow
Chickadees
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren
Golden-crowned Kinglet* (Raleigh)
Eastern Bluebird
European Starling
Song Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Northern Cardinal* (Pocahontas)
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

*denotes species found on all but one count, shown in parenthesis.

The 2014 and 2015 counts had comparable conditions in regard to weather and precipitation, which lends itself to comparing trends. Most years we have extremes in weather or some counts are not reported.

A quick survey of species totals suggests that most species counts are quite stable. Among waterfowl, American Black Ducks were down (# 264 in 2014 down to 94 in 2015) and Mallards were down as well (# 3,035 in 2014 down to 1,843 in 2015). Other waterfowl with lower numbers this year were Redheads (# 10 down to 2), Ring-neck Ducks (# 403 down to 43), Common Goldeneyes (# 19 down to 3), Common Mergansers (# 148 down to 88) and Ruddy Ducks (# 85 down to 9). Only the Hooded Merganser count was up (from 197 to 262). There were more Double-crested Cormorants (# 8 up to 25). One Red-breasted Merganser was observed on the Charles Town count.

An American Bittern was seen on the Canaan count and a Great Egret was seen during count week on both the Parkersburg and Pipestem counts. Buffalo Creek reported Ring-necked Pheasants as usual. Great Blue Herons were down from 135 in 2014 to 96 in 2015.

Eagles are doing well; both Bald Eagles (# 72 up to 101) and Golden Eagles (# 3 up to 13) had reported increases. Peregrine Falcons were reported in Charles Town, Moorefield, and Parkersburg. None were reported in 2014. Merlin were not reported in 2014, but were found on the Charleston, Ona, and Parkersburg counts. The American Woodcock was observed on the Charleston count.

American Coot counts (# 22 up to 52) and Killdeer (# 80 up to 159) also showed increases this year. A Laughing Gull was seen during count week in Pocahontas County, and the Ring-billed Gull count showed an increase (# 225 up to 359) as did the Herring Gulls count (# 4 up to 11).

There were fewer Eastern Screech-Owls seen this year (# 96 down to 76). No Long-eared or Short-eared Owls were observed. Both were observed in 2014.

Both Belted Kingfishers (# 99 down to 72) and Red-headed Woodpeckers (# 32 down to 11) were less frequently seen in 2015. With the exception of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, the woodpecker counts decreased: Downy (# 1,071 down to 903), Hairy (# 230 down to 185), Northern Flicker (# 565 down to 419) and Pileated (# 408 down to 307). There were also fewer Eastern Phoebe (# 36 down to 18).

There was a decrease in the Blue Jays (# 3,012 down to 1,469). Common Ravens increased from 201 in 2014 to 298 in 2015. There were only nine Horned Larks reported this year but 151 in 2014. Brown Creepers were down (# 107 down to 71) and Carolina Wrens were down appreciably (# 1,402 down to 935) but Golden-crowned Kinglets increased from 205 in 2014 to 325 this year.

Among the thrushes, Hermits were down (# 66 down to 31), but American Robins were up (# 1,536 up to 5,225) as were Eastern Bluebirds (# 1,529 up to 1,828). There was only one Brown Thrasher seen this year but seven in 2014. Cedar Waxwings more

than doubled in count (# 567 up to 1,282). The same can be said for Yellow-rumped Warblers (# 152 up to 384). Eastern Towhees increased as well (# 237 up to 547).

American Tree Sparrows doubled their numbers (# 105 up to 234), but there was a marked drop of White-throated Sparrows (# 2,073 down to 1,549) and White-crowned Sparrows (# 533 down to 301).

Eastern Meadowlarks (# 27 down to 11), Common Grackles (# 20 down to 4) and Brown-headed Cowbirds (# 432 down to 73) also had big drops in observed sightings.

There were some increases in northern migrants such as Pine Siskins (# 94 up to 602). A Common Redpoll was seen on the Buffalo Creek count, Red Crossbills in Pocahontas County (these may be residents), and Evening Grosbeaks on the Moorefield count.

The variability of observations for one year must not be construed to indicate a trend. It would take at least several more years of data collected during similar weather conditions to determine if a particular species is becoming more abundant or declining.

I want to thank everyone who participated in the counts and particularly those who submitted the data to Audubon. My husband was very helpful with typing and computer expertise.

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Valley Falls State Park Saw-whet Owl Banding Station for 2015

Joey Herron

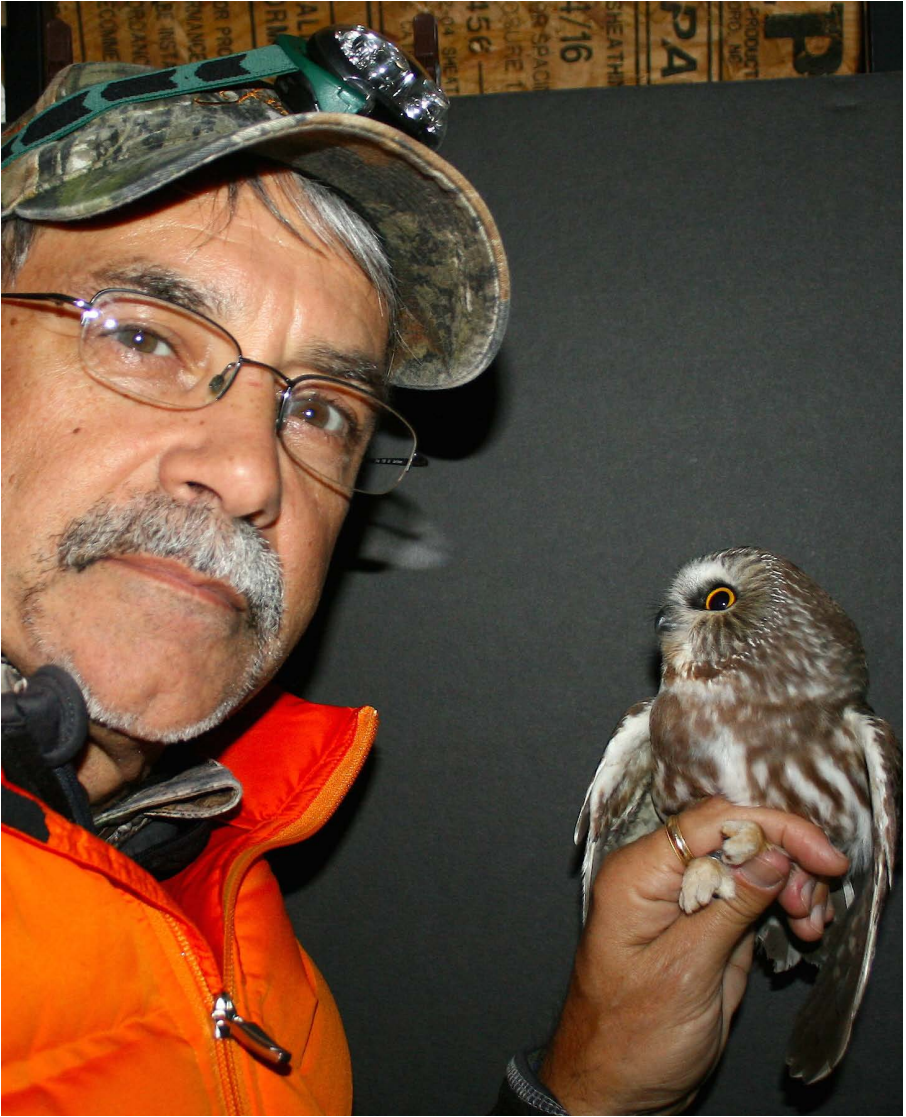
The 11th year of banding Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) at Valley Falls State Park was the third lowest year for captures since this project began in 2005, replacing last year's third lowest total. See Table 1. There were numerous nights this year during the peak time of migration that had perfect conditions but no owls. After 11 years of banding, 306 NSWOs have been captured, including 28 foreign recaptures and 1 return. The breakdown shows a heavy advantage for females, 75% to 8% for males. The unknown category completes the last 17%. The adult, hatch year ratio is almost even with 53% adult and 47% hatch year individuals.

In 2015 banding began on October 15 and ended on November 23. See Table 2 for the 2015 banding summary. Fifteen owls were captured in 2015, 50% below the 10-year average, including two foreign recaptures. The station operated on 15 nights, with the nets being opened for fifty-nine and three quarter hours. Six nights yielded owls with a peak capture of six NSWO's captured on the night of November 8.

Of the 15 captures, 8 were adults, 7 were hatch year birds. Females again led the way in 2015 with 14 captures. There were no males captured and one of unknown sex. An owl caught on November 8 was an owl that was banded as a second year bird in 2010 in Pennsylvania. Also, on the night of November 8, the 300th owl was captured for this banding station in 11 years of banding.

The station had 174 visitors from eight states in 2015, including students from the WVU Wildlife Society and various groups and organizations from all over West Virginia. Unfortunately, on three of the nights with visitors, no owls were captured. In the past 11 years, the station has hosted over twelve hundred visitors from 10 states and the District of Columbia. A special thanks to Meghan Jensen, a graduate assistant at West Virginia University, who coordinated and ran an experimental banding project at Cooper's Rock State Forest for the second year. The station there captured only one owl on a few nights of operation, giving some WVU wildlife students some experience with this tiny eastern owl.

I would like to thank Valley Falls State Park superintendent, Brett Harshbarger, for the use of the park facilities and allowing visitors to experience the fall migration. Without Brett's support, this operation would not be possible.



The author poses with the 300th Northern Saw-whet Owl captured at his station on November 8, 2015.

Table 1
Eleven-year Banding Totals

Females	Males	Unknown	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year	Second Year
233	23	50	147	105	54

Table 2
Banding Summary for 2015

Date	NSWO caught
10/25/15	0
10/18/15	1
10/20/15	0
10/30/15	0
10/31/15	0
11/3/15	1
11/4/15	0
11/6/15	0
11/7/15	2 (1 foreign)
11/8/15	6 (1 foreign)
11/11/15	0
11/14/15	0
11/16/15	3
11/20/15	2
11/23/2016	0
Total	15

	Age	
After hatch year (AHY)	4	
Second year (SY)	4	53% (adults)
Hatch year (HY)	7	47%

	Sex	
Female	14	93%
Male	0	
Unknown	1	7%

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Book Reviews

Editor's note: Because the prices of books vary considerably depending how they are sold, prices of books will no longer be given in *Redstart* book reviews.

The Wisdom of Birds: An Illustrated History of Ornithology by Tim Birkhead with many color plates by various artists. 2008. New York: Bloomsbury USA. 433 pages, including illustrations, notes, bibliography, glossary, and index.

The author of this informative, beautifully illustrated, history of the development of ornithology as a scientific endeavor, Tim Birkhead, is a Fellow of the Royal Society and a professor at the University of Sheffield, where he teaches animal behavior and history of science. Birkhead gives the reader an impressive review of ornithology as it developed from repetition of Aristotle's principles and mere repetition of folklore, mixed with Christian moralizing, "in favor of unadulterated natural history" observation and scientifically conducted experiments modeled on the work of Francis Bacon, whose philosophy demanded that knowledge be based on actual observation and evidence from experiments. The book reviews the ground-breaking work in the mid-1600s of John Ray, Sir Thomas Browne, and Francis Willughby, and continues with discussion of the work of the most important ornithologists up to the present day. The many topics covered include chapters on bird development, instinct and intelligence, migration, the breeding cycle, territory, birdsong, sex, infidelity, reproduction, and longevity, showing in each case how modern theory evolved, especially after the mid-1800s. The book is lavishly illustrated with many color drawings. The writing is lively and full of examples, and quotations from the works of prominent ornithologists. I highly recommend Birkhead's book to any birder who wants a better idea of how our modern ideas about birds were developed.

One Bird at a Time: Portraits of Individual Lives by Bernd Heinrich. 2016. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 181 pages, including bibliography, index, and drawings by the author.

Most birders know the work of Bernd Heinrich. I especially enjoyed and continually make reference to his work on ravens and birds in winter, based on his exhaustive field work and experiments conducted in Vermont and Maine. *One Bird at a Time* reports the results of his observations on 16 species of birds that can be observed in northern New England. Heinrich climbs trees, chases birds over the countryside, and observes from the window of his Maine cabin to see many things that many of us have missed about the behavior of birds found in that state, often in winter. He asks interesting questions and then does not rest until he can find answers. How do small birds get through a winter night? Why do Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers drum? What are Black-capped Chickadees eating in the treetops in

winter? How many ants does it take to raise a baby flicker? With each species he wants to know where it lives, what it eats, how does it forage, where and how it nests, what it fears, and what it likes and dislikes. Some time ago BBC member Dawn Fox told a story about a Ruffed Grouse that became attached to her family members. So too does Heinrich report that rare individual grouse can become attached to humans. If Dawn hadn't told the story first, this book is where I would have learned about the rare behavior.

Heinrich's sketches and colored drawings illustrate behaviors discussed in *One Bird at a Time*. These drawings add to the interest of his observations. Although his book is not a comprehensive discussion of all of the species that one might see from his Maine cabin, some of the birds, such as the Common Redpoll, are not easily observed by West Virginians. Birders will enjoy sharing his adventures with birds and learn more about each one whether familiar to the reader or not.

Albert R. Buckelew Jr.

Field Notes Winter Season

December 1, 2015–February 28, 2016

Casey Rucker

December was the warmest on record in West Virginia, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center (NRCC) at Cornell University, January was slightly colder than normal, and February was slightly warmer. December and February were wetter than normal statewide, while January was drier.

These notes were gathered from the National Audubon Society sponsored West Virginia Bird Listserv, from Christmas Bird Count (CBC) results, and from field notes submitted to the editor by e-mail and regular mail. The full content of the submitted notes by the contributors of the WV Listserv may be viewed by visiting the archives at the following web site: <http://list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html>, and the results of the Christmas Bird Counts may be found at <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/CurrentYear/ResultsByCount.aspx>.

On December 24, Davette Saeler found and photographed a **Northern Shrike** at Stonewall Jackson Lake, Lewis County; the bird was re-found by Terry Bronson on the 30th, and by John Boback on January 1. Overall, it was the second middling winter in a row for West Virginia bird diversity, with 141 species reported in the state during the winter from 38 of West Virginia's 55 counties.

Geese, Swans, Ducks—Wilma Jarrell spotted two **Trumpeter Swans** at Hannibal Dam, Wetzel County, on February 19. On January 19 Jon Benedetti found a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at Neal Island in the Ohio River, Wood County. David Patick and Michael Griffith saw 13 **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area, Cabell County, on February 6; and on February 20 they spotted 22 at the same location. On February 19 Michael Griffith saw four **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Gallipolis Ferry, and two days later Gary Rankin re-found them. Gary Rankin and Michael Griffith saw two **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Shady Waters Campground, Mason County, along with a blue-morph **Snow Goose**, on February 27. There were two sightings of a lone **Snow Goose** appearing in the company of a lone **Ross's Goose** in the Huntington Christmas Bird Count at Sugarwood Golf Course, Wayne County, on January 3, and at Pruntytown Wildlife Management Area, Taylor County, as seen by David Daniels on February 2, and re-found by John Boback, Joseph Hildreth and Terry Bronson over the following two days. Terry Bronson also spotted a hybrid **Snow Goose x Ross's Goose** at Hildebrand Lock and Dam, Monongalia County, on January 15. John Boback and Michael Slaven saw a **Cackling Goose** above Hannibal Lock and Dam, Wetzel County, on January 27; and Gary Rankin spotted a **Cackling Goose** near Ravenswood, Jackson, County, on February 21.

Reports of **Canada Geese** were as usual widespread throughout the state. This season birders reported **Mute Swans** only in Mason County (LC, MG) and Wetzel County (JBo, WJ). **Tundra Swans** were reported in Grant (FA), Jefferson (MO, CD), Mason (GR, MG), Monongalia (JBo, TB), Ohio (JBo), Pendleton (HMy), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Waterfowl numbers were low for the second winter in a row. The following species made appearances in at least 10 West Virginia counties: **Gadwalls, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Hooded and Common Mergansers, and Ruddy Ducks**. Birders in at least six counties each found **Wood Ducks, American Wigeons, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teal, Greater Scaup, and Common Goldeneyes**. The following birds inspired reports from the counties listed: **Northern Shovelers** in Barbour (RBo), Mason (DP, MG, GR), and Monongalia (JH, JBo, TB); **Canvasbacks** in Mason (DP, MG), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (JB); **Surf Scoters** in Ohio (DCo) and Taylor (MSI); **Long-tailed Duck** in Jefferson (MO); and **Red-breasted Mergansers** in Cabell (GR), Jefferson (MO), Mason (DP, MG), and Wetzel (WJ).

Grouse, Turkeys—There were reports of **Ruffed Grouse** from Greenbrier County (CBC), Monongalia County (GN), Randolph County (HMy), Tucker County (CR, CBC), Wayne County (GR), Wetzel County (WJ), and Wood County (CBC). Birders found **Wild Turkeys** in many counties throughout the state, including many on the tallies of Christmas Bird Counts. Herb Myers enjoyed a flock of at least 12 **Wild Turkeys** in Philippi, Barbour County, on New Year's Day.

Loons, Grebes—It was a fair winter for **Common Loons** in our state with reports from Hardy (DH), Jefferson (MO), Mason (MG), Mercer (JP), Monongalia (TB, CBC), Raleigh (CBC), Tucker (JBU), and Wood (DJE, CBC) Counties. It was also another good winter for reports of **Pied-billed Grebes** throughout the state, but **Horned Grebes** appeared only in reports from Jefferson (MO), Mason (MG, DP, GR), Monongalia (TB), Taylor (TB), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Cormorants, Bitterns, Herons, Egrets—An **American Bittern** made a surprise appearance in the Canaan Valley CBC, Tucker County, on December 20. Reports of **Double-crested Cormorants** and **Great Blue Herons** were widespread throughout the state. On December 19 **Great Egrets** brightened two Christmas Bird Counts, in Pipestem, Summers County, and Parkersburg, in Wood County, where a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** was a first-time sighting as well. Joshua Holland saw a juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on December 9.

Vultures—Reports of **Black Vultures** came from 16 counties, and **Turkey Vultures** were mentioned in reports from 19 counties. Rennie and Amy Talbert watched more than 35 **Turkey Vultures** coming to roost near their home in Barboursville, Cabell County, on February 28.

Hawks, Eagles—**Bald Eagles** were reported from 21 counties this winter. On January 9 and 10, in their 11th annual Winter Eagle Survey, as reported by James Phillips, 67 participants found 33 **Bald Eagles** as well as 4 **Golden Eagles** at sites along the Bluestone, Greenbrier, and New Rivers, on Indian Creek, and at Stonewall Jackson Lake and Tygart Lake. Diane Holsinger watched a pair of **Bald Eagles** *working on their nest* at Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County, on December 15. **Northern Harriers**, **Sharp-shinned Hawks**, **Cooper's Hawks**, **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **Red-tailed Hawks**, and **Golden Eagles** all appeared widely throughout West Virginia during the winter season. **Rough-legged Hawks** inspired reports only in three counties this winter: Grant (JBo, FA), Ohio (CBC), and Tucker (CBC, HMy). Hullet Good hosted **Sharp-shinned**, **Cooper's**, **Red-shouldered**, and **Red-tailed Hawks** in his one-acre forest from February 25 through the 28th. Laura Ceperley, Barbara Koster, Christy Carr, and Martha Hopper watched a vocal pair of **Red-shouldered Hawks** *courting and mating* at McClintic Wildlife Management Area, Mason County, on February 26.

Rails, Coots—**American Coots** appeared in nine counties this winter.

Cranes—On January 17, Richard Bailey saw and photographed two **Sandhill Cranes** at Patterson Creek, Grant County, and he reported that three days later Gwen and Alan Balogh observed 18 **Sandhill Cranes** flying over Greenbrier County in a V-formation.

Plovers—Reports of **Killdeer** were widespread this mild winter, with records from 16 counties.

Sandpipers—Birders in four West Virginia counties reported **Wilson's Snipes**: Greenbrier (CBC), Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (WS), and Pocahontas (CBC). **American Woodcocks** showed up in Cabell (MG), Kanawha (CBC), Monongalia (MSI), Putnam (CE), Summers (JP), Wayne (MG, GR), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (KCa) Counties.

Gulls—On December 18, Kitty Bailey saw three **Laughing Gulls** in Beard, Pocahontas County, and the birds were re-found in the Christmas Bird Count on the next day. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were observed by Jon Benedetti and the Mountwood Bird Club on January 7 on the Ohio River between Middle Island Dam, Pleasants County, and Hannibal Dam in Wetzel County, and they also made appearances in Monongalia (JBo) and Jefferson (JF) Counties. Birders reported **Ring-billed Gulls** in 14 West Virginia counties, while **Herring Gulls** appeared in reports from seven counties. Matthew Orsie counted 66 **Ring-billed Gulls** in the vicinity of Martinsburg, Berkeley County, on February 21. On January 24 Derek Courtney spotted a **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, a **Glaucous Gull**, and three **Great Black-backed Gulls** among approximately 1,500 birds at Pike Island Lock and Dam, Ohio County. James Phillips found another **Great Black-backed Gull** at the mouth of the Bluestone River in Summers County on February 28.

Pigeons, Doves—**Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** continue to reside throughout the state, as reported primarily in Christmas Bird Counts.

Owls—It was a good winter for **owl** sightings in West Virginia. Once again, the only winter report of **Barn Owl** came from Moorefield, Hardy County (CBC) on December 31. Reports of **Eastern Screech-Owls** came from 14 counties and **Great Horned Owls** inspired birders in eight counties. Birders in 10 counties reported **Barred Owls**. John Boback spotted a **Short-eared Owl** near Masontown, Preston County, on December 13, and James Farley saw his first **Short-eared Owl** in Jefferson County, along Cattail Road on January 10. On the weekend of December 19 and 20, the discovery of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** brightened the Canaan Valley (Tucker County) and Morgantown (Monongalia County) Christmas Bird Counts, and the Elkins (Randolph County) CBC found a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** on January 4.

Kingfishers—West Virginia birders reported **Belted Kingfishers** in 17 counties.

Woodpeckers—**Red-headed Woodpeckers** made appearances in reports from Hardy (DH), Jefferson (JBz), Kanawha (CBC), Lewis (JBo), and Taylor (TB) Counties. **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**, **Northern Flickers**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were all subjects of widespread reports in West Virginia over the winter.

Falcons—**American Kestrels** were represented in Christmas Bird Counts in most parts of the state. John Snyder hosted his first **Merlin**, a female that landed on one of his solar panels, at his home in Nicholas County on December 11. Birders also spotted **Merlins** in Kanawha (CBC), Monongalia (TB), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (CBC) Counties. **Peregrine Falcon** reports came from Cabell County (GR), Hardy County (CBC), Jefferson County (CBC), Mason County (DP, MG), Ohio County (PM), Pleasants County (JB), Putnam County (DP, MG), and Wood County (CBC, JB).

Flycatchers—Reports of **Eastern Phoebe** came from 11 counties this winter.

Shrikes—Reports of **Loggerhead Shrikes** came from Grant County (RBi), Hardy County (MWi), and Pocahontas County (CBC). The **Northern Shrike** found by Davette Saeler at Stonewall Jackson Lake is described near the beginning of these notes.

Vireos—The 44th Pipestem Christmas Bird Count found an extremely late **Blue-headed Vireo** in Summers County on December 19.

Crows, Jays, Ravens—**Blue Jays**, **American Crows**, and **Common Ravens** appeared in their usual haunts throughout the state. In addition to expected reports of **Fish Crows** from Jefferson County (BT, CBC, JBz), **Fish Crows** were also seen in the Pendleton County Christmas Bird Count on December 18.

Larks—Reports of **Horned Larks** came from Jefferson County (CBC), Mason County (GR, MG, DP), Preston County (RBo), and Raleigh County (CBC).

Swallows—James Phillips saw a **Tree Swallow** flying over New River in Hinton, Summers County, on February 20, and five days later Michael Griffith spotted nine **Tree Swallows** at Green Bottom WMA, Cabell County.

Chickadees, Titmice—**Carolina** and **Black-capped Chickadees** appeared in reports from their overlapping territories throughout West Virginia. **Tufted Titmice**

occupied their usual spots in reports from throughout the state. A **Black-capped Chickadee** was the first bird of the year for LeJay Graffious at his home in Old Hemlock, Preston County, on New Year's Day.

Nuthatches—Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared in reports from Kanawha County (CBC), Monongalia County (CBC), Ohio County (CBC), Pendleton County (CBC), Tucker County (CBC, LC), and Wood County (CBC). **White-breasted Nuthatches** were well-reported throughout the state.

Creepers—Birders in 15 West Virginia counties reported **Brown Creepers**. Donny Good saw a **Brown Creeper** at his farm in Amma, Roane County, on December 4.

Wrens—House Wrens appeared in the Charleston and Parkersburg Christmas Bird Counts, Kanawha and Wood Counties, respectively, on December 19. On the same day the Pipestem CBC found a surprising **Marsh Wren** in Summers County. West Virginia birders reported **Winter** and **Carolina Wrens** in good numbers statewide.

Kinglets—This winter **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were familiar sights in most parts of the state, while **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** appeared in Berkeley (CBC), Braxton (WG), Fayette (DP), Jefferson (DHa), Kanawha (HG), Summers (CBC), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (CBC) Counties.

Thrushes—Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes, and American Robins appeared in good numbers in our state this winter, mostly in lower elevations. On February 13 Bruni Haydl timed **Eastern Bluebirds** to see how long 100 mealworms would last at her feeders in Charles Town, Jefferson County, and all were consumed in under a minute. Jeff Del Col counted at least 50 **American Robins** among holly and spruce trees on the Albertus Magnus University campus in Philippi, Barbour County, on January 21.

Mockingbirds, Thrashers—A Brown Thrasher appeared in the Hampshire County Christmas Bird Count on January 2. West Virginians reported **Northern Mockingbirds** widely over the winter season.

Starlings—European Starlings continued their widespread occupation of habitats throughout our state.

Pipits—On January 18 Frederick Atwood spotted 18 **American Pipits** on Royal Glen Road, Grant County. Randy Bodkins saw the only other reported **American Pipit** on January 25, on Route 219 in Randolph County.

Waxwings—Cedar Waxwings were well-represented in birders' reports this winter, with sightings in 15 counties.

Warblers—A Common Yellowthroat was a first-time appearance on the Pendleton County CBC on December 18. Joshua Holland saw a **Palm Warbler** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on December 9; and the Parkersburg Christmas Bird Count found another **Palm Warbler** on December 19. On January 23 Heather McSherry found a **Pine Warbler**, which had flown into her garage in Shepherdstown, Jefferson

County. Birders in lower elevations saw Myrtle-race **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at locations throughout the state.

Towhees, Sparrows, Juncos—Carol Del-Colle hosted a **Lark Sparrow** at her feeders in Summit Point, Jefferson County, beginning on February 5, and the bird remained through February 13. A **Savannah Sparrow** was found on the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count, Monongalia County, on December 19; and on January 8 Deborah Hale saw at least 24 **Savannah Sparrows** in Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County. **Eastern Towhees** made their usual appearances at lower elevations in many parts of the state. In addition, **American Tree, Field, Fox, Song, Swamp, White-throated** and **White-crowned Sparrows**, as well as **Dark-eyed Juncos**, appeared widely. **Chipping Sparrows** inspired birders' reports only in Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (BH), Pocahontas (CBC), and Wood (CBC) Counties. Shannon Burner had both a new yard bird and a lifer when two **American Tree Sparrows** visited her home in Keyser, Mineral County, on January 29.

Cardinals—Birders throughout the state reported **Northern Cardinals** in good numbers. The Huntington Christmas Bird Count found a very late, male **Indigo Bunting** at a bird feeder on January 3.

Blackbirds, Allies—Reports of **Red-winged Blackbirds** came from areas all over the state. Reports were scarcer for **Eastern Meadowlarks** (three counties), **Rusty Blackbirds** (five counties), **Common Grackles** (six counties), and **Brown-headed Cowbirds** (five counties). On January 15 N. Wade Snyder saw and photographed a **Baltimore Oriole** in Bardane, Jefferson County. Joette Borzik and the Potomac Valley Audubon Society observed at least ten **Rusty Blackbirds** in a mixed flock that included **Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and one **Common Grackle** at Altona Marsh, Jefferson County, on December 12.

Finches, Allies—Feeders in most parts of the state hosted **House Finches, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins**, and **American Goldfinches**. Rodney Bartgis saw **Red Crossbills** in two locations in Randolph County on December 19 and 21, and on February 14 at Gaudineer Knob on the Randolph-Pocahontas border. John Boback found eight **Red Crossbills** near the Nature Center at Cranberry Wilderness, Pocahontas County, on January 9. The author of these notes hosted a one-stop visit on February 17 from the state's only reported **Common Redpoll**, an adult male on February 16 at his feeders in Dry Fork, Tucker County, where he also hosted a flock of **Pine Siskins** numbering from 200 to 800 over the entire winter season. The Moorefield Christmas Bird Count found 5 **Evening Grosbeaks**, the only report in West Virginia this winter, on December 31 in Hardy County.

Weaver Finches—Thanks to Christmas Bird Counts, we have been assured that the **House Sparrow** continues throughout the state, primarily in urban settings.

Contributors to the Winter Field Notes: Frederick Atwood (FA), Richard Bailey (RBi), Jon Benedetti (JB), John Boback (JBo), Randy Bodkins (RBo), Joette Borzik (JBz), Terry Bronson (TB), Jacqueline Burns (JBu), Kevin Campbell (KCa),

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2016 Calendar of Events The Brooks Bird Club, Inc.

Date	Activity	Place
January	BBC Membership Month	Wheeling, WV
February	Write an article for the <i>Mail Bag</i> or <i>The Redstart</i>	mail to editors
February 3-5	Trip to Killdeer Plains (Contact Gene Hilton)	
March 4-6	Early Spring Meeting (Contact Dick Esker)	North Bend State Park Harrisville, WV
March 13	Waterfowl Field Trip (day trip) (Contact Carl Slater)	Seneca Lake, OH
April 23	Three Rivers Bird Club (day trip) (Contact Ryan Tomazin)	Raccoon Creek State Park, PA
May 5-8	Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls State Park	Davis, WV
May 14	International Migratory Bird Day/N. American Migration Count local chapters
June 13-21	Foray - Camp Kidd (contact Janice Emrick or Ryan Tomazin) Tucker County, Parsons, WV
August-October	Bird Banding	Dolly Sods, WV
October 14-16	BBC Fall Retreat/Annual Meeting, Tygart Lake	Grafton, WV
November 9-13	Eastern Shore (Contact Carl Slater)	
Dec. 14-Jan. 5, '17	Christmas Bird Counts local chapters

BBC FORAYS (dates and places tentative)

2016	Camp Kidd, Tucker County	Parsons, WV
2017	Lost River Retreat Center, Hardy County	Lost City, WV
2018	Thornwood 4-H Camp, Pocahontas County	Thornwood, WV

SEASONAL FIELD NOTES DUE

Winter: March 15 Spring: June 15 Summer: September 15 Fall: December 15
 MAIL TO: Casey Rucker, P.O. Box 2, Seneca Rocks, WV 26884 autoblock@frontiernet.net

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February 15 May 15 August 15 November 15
 MAIL TO: Ryan Tomazin, 348 Station St., Apt. 7, Bridgeville, PA 15017 wwwarblers@hotmail.com

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The dates for the 2016 BBC program may be changed if necessary. Changes will be announced on the Web page or in *The Mail Bag*.

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