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First Breeding Record of Red Crossbill in West Virginia: Watoga State Park, Pocahontas County

Casey Rucker

On the morning of August 22, 2020, Samuel Parker and Louanne Fatora were at the activities building of Watoga State Park, Pocahontas County, in an area surrounded by Eastern White Pines. Parker noticed a small dark-colored bird in the grass nearby. He tried to put the bird in a tree but it fluttered back to the ground. Over the next few hours the bird was attended by its Red Crossbill parents, and it became clear that the juvenile was very recently out of the nest and incapable of sustained flight. The nest was undoubtedly nearby, and the first state breeding record was established. Examination of photographs as well as the behavioral description led to confirmation of the breeding record by, among others, state ornithologist Richard Bailey and Craig W. Benkman, the leading expert on North American Red Crossbills.

In 1889, Thaddeus Surber described the Red Crossbill as an “occasional winter visitant” to Greenbrier County (Surber 1889), and two specimens of Red Crossbills taken in that county on March 13, 1889, are preserved at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, New York (Hall 1983). Since the late nineteenth century, reports of Red Crossbill in West Virginia suggested breeding presence in the state.

Red Crossbills exhibit breeding behavior shared by few species; they are opportunistic nesters who may breed at almost any time of year based on the availability of conifer seeds. Their nests are usually hidden near the trunk of a conifer at a considerable distance from the ground, and are accordingly difficult to find. Juveniles are known to fly well within a week after leaving their nests, and may continue to be fed by their parents as long as 25 days thereafter. An observation of Red Crossbills feeding their young, as a consequence, does not necessarily indicate that the nest is nearby (Benkman and Young 2020). Confirmation of breeding can often require serendipity, as in the first North Carolina record where a nest happened to have been built on a branch of an Eastern White Pine that extended over a parking lot at Appalachian State University in Boone during September 1981 (Haggerty 1982).

From June 2004 through mid-February 2005, as reported in *The Redstart*, James Phillips observed flocks as large as 18 Red Crossbills in Pipestem State Park, Summers County. It was an excellent year for the Eastern White Pine cone crop in Pipestem, and the crossbills were often seen feeding on the cones. On September 7, 2004, Phillips and Andy Weaks watched juvenile Red Crossbills begging for food, their bills not yet fully decurved (Phillips 2006). It is likely that the birds bred in the vicinity, but it was not confirmed.

North American Red Crossbills are classified not by subspecies but by call types. Type 1 Red Crossbills, sometimes known as Appalachian Red Crossbills (Young et al. 2011), are considered the most common call type in West Virginia (Benkman and Young 2020). While the foregoing accounts of breeding and possible breeding do not identify the call type, if the birds described are in fact Type 1 it is interesting that Eastern White Pine features prominently in each of the accounts, in contrast to the suggestion that Type 1 Red Crossbills specialize in Red Spruce (Benkman 2007); the same association was postulated in West Virginia as early as 1940 (Lunk and Brooks 1940). It will be interesting to observe in coming years whether Eastern White Pines prove to be more important for our breeding crossbills than Red Spruce.

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Crossbill photos by Louanne Fatora

An Extended Bird Survey in Preston County, West Virginia June 2020

Ryan Tomazin

From June 5 to 15 last summer, I explored Preston County from a home base at Terra Alta Lake. The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated a solo approach to my surveying. Traveling more than 600 miles by car and on foot, I managed to sample most sub-regions within Preston County's 651 square miles. Details of my itinerary may be found in the trip report in *The Mail Bag*, Vol. 77, Issue 3. During the eleven days I recorded 121 bird species as well as many individuals of other taxa. The list follows, including breeding evidence indicated in italics, with my appraisals of species abundance as follows:

Very common—Seen in large numbers every day in all appropriate habitats.

Common—Seen in appropriate habitat every day without any special effort.

Uncommon—Seen in appropriate habitat only with a lot of effort.

Rare—Only one or two seen in the entire study region during the study period.

I also ran solo versions of six ten-mile breeding bird surveys, following routes run for the 2015 Brooks Bird Club Foray that sampled the north, south, east and central parts of the county: three that I ran and three that Carol and Fred McCullough ran. The routes were Alpine Road to Freeport Road; Cranesville CR47 and Loop Road; Aurora Pike from Terra Alta to Rt. 50; Coal Lick Road to Beech Run Road; Stemple Ridge; and Caddel Mountain. The wide variety of habitats covered were intended to give a fair representation of population trends. The Stemple Ridge route featured challenging weather conditions, as overnight storms had dropped the temperature by more than twenty degrees and strong, cold winds reduced both vocalizations and their audibility and increased the number of downed branches and trees.

During my survey, I entered every record into eBird in order to determine numbers and to eliminate double counting. Although every effort was made for accuracy, certain species such as Common Raven, Turkey Vulture, and species with far-carrying communication (woodpeckers, for instance) may have been counted more than once. 121 total species were found.

Bird List

Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis*) — Common. One especially large group at Silver Lake accounted for many that were found. *Two young found with two adults at Rehe. Nine young were with the Silver Lake group.*

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) — Uncommon. Six were found.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) — Uncommon. Thirteen were found.

Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) — Common. *Eight adults with ten young were found on the Cranesville BBS route. At least six young with a hen on Rt. 11. One hen with four or more poults along Morgan Mine Road.*

Ruffed Grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) — Rare. One heard drumming on the Caddell Mountain BBS.

Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*) — Uncommon. Six birds were found.

Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) — Common.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) — Common. Thirty individuals were found.

Black-billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) — Uncommon. Six total birds.

Eastern Whip-poor-will (*Antrostomus vociferus*) — Uncommon. Five birds sang at the Jacobs' residence in Independence, but many subsequent miles of driving that night yielded nothing.

Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*) — Common.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) — Common. Thirty-four individuals were found in a wide variety of habitats.

Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) — Common. *Adult with three eggs in a parking lot along Alpine Lake Road. Two adults with three young birds found along County Route 47/4.*

American Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) — Rare. One flew back and forth over Alpine Lake Road during that BBS route.

Green Heron (*Butorides virescens*) — Uncommon. Only four found.

Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) — Uncommon. Nine were found, with most either seen in Arthurdale or in the field areas north of Terra Alta. Always the possibility of some overlap.

Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) — Common.

Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) — Rare. One bird found at Alpine Lake. It spent time fishing and eventually caught a tiny fish.

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) — Common. Eleven birds found in widespread locales, including most expected wetlands, bogs and lakes.

Broad-winged Hawk (*Buteo platypterus*) — Uncommon. Ten found, so not incredibly uncommon, but more might be expected.

Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) — Uncommon. Only eleven found, though one might expect more than this.

Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) — Uncommon. Four birds found. One was very vocal the whole time at Terra Alta Lake, and another called back and forth with me at Cranesville Swamp for over twenty minutes during nighttime moth photography.

Belted Kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*) — Rare. One found south of Rowlesburg.

Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) — Uncommon. Three separate birds found, all in the southwest quadrant of the county. One was at the Jacobs' feeder in Independence.

Red-bellied Woodpecker (*Melanerpes carolinus*) — Common.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) — Common in habitat. Sixteen birds found, with the majority being found on the Aurora Pike BBS route.

Downy Woodpecker (*Dryobates pubescens*) — Common.

Hairy Woodpecker (*Dryobates villosus*) — Uncommon.

Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*) — Common. With forty-five birds found, this was the most numerous woodpecker species.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) — Common. Forty birds found, the second highest woodpecker.

American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) — Uncommon. Three birds seen.

Great Crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus crinitus*) — Uncommon. Only eight birds found.

Eastern Kingbird (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) — Uncommon. Only ten birds found with plentiful habitat.

Eastern Wood-Pewee (*Contopus virens*) — Common.

Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*) — Common, with fifty-one individuals. *Adult at nest along Hemlock Run Trail near Pisgah.*

Alder Flycatcher (*Empidonax alnorum*) — Common. Fifteen birds found. They were in good numbers at Cranesville Swamp, but were found in many wet areas around the county.

Willow Flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) — Uncommon. Only nine found. This was the interesting surprise, being much less numerous than Alder Flycatchers.

Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*) — Uncommon. Twelve birds found.

Eastern Phoebe (*Sayornis phoebe*) — Common. *Active nest at Terra Alta Lake Road cabin. Nest found under roadside outcropping near Marquess. Family group at the entrance to the quarry caves along Rt. 72.*

White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*) — Uncommon. Six birds were found.

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*) — Common. Eighteen birds were found, and they were widespread.

Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*) — Common, with fifty birds found.

Warbling Vireo (*Vireo gilvus*) — Uncommon. Only four found with more being expected with the number of waterways and lakes in the area.

Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) — Very Common. 387 birds found.

Blue Jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) — Common.

American Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) — Very Common. One young bird seen near Camp Galilee. One young bird along Rt. 50 south of Nestorville.

Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) — Common. Sixty birds found, though some overlap would be expected. One juvenile found on Caddell Mountain BBS route. Adult with two juveniles chasing it and begging for food at Rehe. One adult being harassed by four juvenile birds on County Road 50/12. One adult with one begging juvenile on a hill in a farm field.

Tree Swallow (*Tachycineta bicolor*) — Common, but not numerous.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) — Common in habitat. Adults exhibiting nesting behavior at river-level along Rt. 72.

Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) — Common, especially around the numerous farms. 127 individuals found.

Cliff Swallow (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*) — Uncommon. A small colony found in the town of Cranesville. Also found at Alpine Lake. Nine total birds seen.

Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*) — Rare. One bird heard vocalizing in a Rowlesburg neighborhood across the river from the main town.

Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*) — Common, but not overly numerous with seventy-five birds found. Active nest at the lake at Oglebay Mountain Camp property.

Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*) — Common.

Red-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta canadensis*) — Uncommon. Five found.

White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*) — Common.

Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) — Uncommon. Nine birds found.

House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) — Common. The most numerous wren with eighty-eight birds found.

Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) — Uncommon. Only eight birds heard.

Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) — Common.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (*Poliptila caerulea*) — Uncommon. Only sixteen of this early nester were found.

Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*) — Common in habitat. Eighteen were found in the upland spruce and hemlock forests.

Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) — Common.

Veery (*Catharus fuscescens*) — Common. Twenty-one found, making them fairly common, but none heard in their old haunts around Terra Alta Lake. A very vocal bird defended territory with a number of vocalizations at Cranesville Swamp during twilight one night.

Hermit Thrush (*Catharus guttatus*) — Uncommon. Fifteen birds found, but they were absent from a number of expected locations.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*) — Common.

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*) — Very Common. 285 birds found. *One young bird found at Silver Lake.*

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) — Common. 109 individuals in total.

Brown Thrasher (*Toxostoma rufum*) — Common. Thirty-six found.

Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) — Uncommon. Only six found with copious habitat.

European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) — Very Common. *Three fledglings found at Preston County Country Club.*

Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) — Common. Ninety-five found.

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) — Common.

House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) — Uncommon. Only seven birds found.

Purple Finch (*Haemorhous purpureus*) — Rare. Only one heard singing at Cranesville Swamp.

American Goldfinch (*Spinus tristis*) — Common and widespread.

Grasshopper Sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*) — Uncommon. Not uncommon in habitat, but with only thirteen birds found, they were not as widespread as in past years.

Chipping Sparrow (*Spizella passerina*) — Very Common. 134 birds found in most habitats.

Field Sparrow (*Spizella pusilla*) — Common. Ninety-five individuals found. *Nest with adult feeding 2-3 young at Brookside Farm in Aurora.*

Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) — Common, but only fairly so. Twenty-four birds found in upland habitats.

Henslow's Sparrow (*Centronyx henslowii*) — Rare. Three found on adjoining territories on Beech Run Road and nowhere else, though plenty of habitat exists. Beech Run Road's extensive farm fields were chemically-treated in the last couple of years, and the larger numbers of these and other uncommon sparrows are hanging onto the fringes of these fields.

Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) — Common. Twenty-three were found in widespread habitat.

Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) — Very Common. 244 birds found throughout.

Swamp Sparrow (*Melospiza georgiana*) — Common. 37 individuals found in most of the swamps spots in the upland areas.

Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*) — Very Common. 180 birds counted. *One fledgling found in forest behind Brookside Farm in Aurora.*

Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) — Uncommon. Seven total birds found, with the majority being in the Beech Run Road general habitat area north of Albright.

Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) — Common. Eighty-one birds found. Luckily, hay-cutting didn't begin in earnest until just before this trip was over.

Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) — Common.

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) — Rare. This unexpected vagrant was at the WVU JW Ruby Research Farm in Reedsville from March until well into the summer of 2020. I listened to the bird vocalize for a long time, but never succeeded in seeing it.

Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius*) — Uncommon. Only seven birds found, though habitat isn't lacking.

Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus galbula*) — Common, but only fairly so with fourteen birds found. *Active nest with adults feeding young at Cheat River Outfitters in Albright.*

Red-winged Blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) — Very Common.

Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) — Common.

Common Grackle (*Quiscalus quiscula*) — Common.

Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) — Common. With ninety-two birds found, this was the third-most common warbler species.

Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) — Rare. One bird found singing on County Road 50/12.

Louisiana Waterthrush (*Parkesia motacilla*) — Common, but not numerous with eighteen birds found. *Two young found along Hemlock Run near Pisgah.*

Northern Waterthrush (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) — Uncommon. Three birds found in a total of two areas of Cranesville Swamp and the vicinity. Hardly expected elsewhere.

Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) — Rare. One singing bird found on County Road 76 in Marquess.

Blue-winged Warbler (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) — Uncommon. Eight singing males found, the majority being in the Beech Run area.

Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*) — Common. Fifty-six birds found.

Kentucky Warbler (*Geothlypis formosa*) — Uncommon. Seven singing males found in a number of lower-elevation locations.

Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*) — Common. 140 birds found, making this the most populous warbler species.

Hooded Warbler (*Setophaga citrina*) — Common. Sixty found throughout the area.

- American Redstart** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) — Common. Ninety-seven found.
- Cerulean Warbler** (*Setophaga cerulea*) — Uncommon. Four found, mainly in the lower elevations.
- Northern Parula** (*Setophaga americana*) — Common. Twenty-two found.
- Magnolia Warbler** (*Setophaga magnolia*) — Common.
- Blackburnian Warbler** (*Setophaga fusca*) — Uncommon. Only four found, only 1-2 at Cathedral State Forest.
- Yellow Warbler** (*Setophaga petechia*) — Common.
- Chestnut-sided Warbler** (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) — Common. Fifty-two birds found.
- Black-throated Blue Warbler** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) — Common.
- Yellow-rumped Warbler** (*Setophaga coronata*) — Uncommon. Only eight birds found.
- Yellow-throated Warbler** (*Setophaga dominica*) — Common enough at low elevations with twelve males heard. One singing male found at Camp Galilee.
- Prairie Warbler** (*Setophaga discolor*) — Uncommon. Five singing males found, ranging across the lower elevations.
- Black-throated Green Warbler** (*Setophaga virens*) — Common.
- Canada Warbler** (*Cardellina canadensis*) — Uncommon in habitat. Only three males found, all in one small area at the south end of Cranesville Swamp along Lake Ford Road. None found in the swamp.
- Scarlet Tanager** (*Piranga olivacea*) — Common. Forty-eight found.
- Northern Cardinal** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) — Common. Nest found along Allegheny Trail north of Albright.
- Rose-breasted Grosbeak** (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) — Common, but not plentiful. Eighteen found.
- Indigo Bunting** (*Passerina cyanea*) — Common. 123 birds found across the territory.

Breeding Bird Surveys

Table 1 gives the number of each species recorded on the six Breeding Bird Survey routes and the number of stops where each was found.

Table 1
Birds Recorded by Species

Species	Total Individuals	Stops Present
Canada Goose	39	3
Wood Duck	2	2
Mallard	2	1
Ruffed Grouse	1	1
Wild Turkey	15	12
Mourning Dove	92	59
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	17	12
Black-billed Cuckoo	1	1
Chimney Swift	13	7
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	4	4
Killdeer	6	6
American Woodcock	1	1
Red-shouldered Hawk	1	1
Red-bellied Woodpecker	45	38
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	15	11
Downy Woodpecker	7	7
Hairy Woodpecker	2	2
Northern Flicker	13	10
Pileated Woodpecker	19	18
Great Crested Flycatcher	3	3
Eastern Kingbird	2	2
Eastern Wood-Pewee	25	23
Acadian Flycatcher	9	7
Alder Flycatcher	4	3
Willow Flycatcher	3	3
Least Flycatcher	4	3
Eastern Phoebe	30	29
White-eyed Vireo	2	2
Yellow-throated Vireo	1	1
Blue-headed Vireo	12	12
Red-eyed Vireo	150	75
Blue Jay	26	19
American Crow	120	66
Common Raven	11	9
Barn Swallow	19	8
Black-capped Chickadee	22	20
Tufted Titmouse	34	32

Species	Total Individuals	Stops Present
White-breasted Nuthatch	13	11
House Wren	38	35
Carolina Wren	18	18
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3	3
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	1
Eastern Bluebird	7	6
Veery	14	10
Hermit Thrush	5	3
Wood Thrush	31	25
American Robin	113	69
Gray Catbird	40	31
Brown Thrasher	6	6
Northern Mockingbird	1	1
European Starling	163	33
Cedar Waxwing	22	11
House Sparrow	18	7
House Finch	2	1
American Goldfinch	48	29
Grasshopper Sparrow	5	4
Chipping Sparrow	80	53
Field Sparrow	33	30
Dark-eyed Junco	7	5
Henslow's Sparrow	3	1
Savannah Sparrow	12	7
Song Sparrow	96	70
Swamp Sparrow	2	2
Eastern Towhee	60	47
Yellow-breasted Chat	2	2
Bobolink	37	20
Eastern Meadowlark	18	14
Orchard Oriole	1	1
Baltimore Oriole	3	3
Red-winged Blackbird	120	40
Brown-headed Cowbird	50	31
Common Grackle	47	15
Ovenbird	31	25
Louisiana Waterthrush	4	4
Blue-winged Warbler	1	1
Black-and-white Warbler	19	18
Kentucky Warbler	1	1
Common Yellowthroat	53	47
Hooded Warbler	14	11
American Redstart	22	17
Cerulean Warbler	1	1
Northern Parula	6	6

Species	Total Individuals	Stops Present
Magnolia Warbler	4	4
Yellow Warbler	15	15
Chestnut-sided Warbler	19	17
Black-throated Blue Warbler	6	5
Prairie Warbler	3	2
Black-throated Green Warbler	16	14
Scarlet Tanager	15	15
Northern Cardinal	41	36
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	9	9
Indigo Bunting	50	39
Total	92 species, 2,222 individuals	

Table 2 lists the 10 most-abundant species recorded on the 6 BBS routes and compares this with the prevalence of these species on the previous three Brooks Bird Club forays in this county.

Table 2
Most Abundant Species

Abundance Rank				Species	No. of 2020 Indiv.	Percent of Total			
'05	'10	'15	2020			2020	'15	'10	'05
7	5	6	1	European Starling	163	7.3	3.5	4.9	3.8
1	2	2	2	Red-eyed Vireo	150	6.8	7.5	9.0	8.0
6	4	4	T-3	American Crow	120	5.4	5.0	5.6	4.1
3	3	1	T-4	Red-winged Blackbird	120	5.4	9.5	6.5	6.5
2	1	3	5	American Robin	113	5.1	6.7	9.2	7.1
4	10	5	6	Song Sparrow	96	4.3	4.2	2.8	4.2
8	12	10	7	Mourning Dove	92	4.1	2.6	2.7	3.4
9	8	13	8	Chipping Sparrow	80	3.6	1.0	3.0	3.2
15	11	11	9	Eastern Towhee	60	2.7	2.6	2.7	2.4
11	13	8	10	Common Yellowthroat	53	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.5

Table 3 indicates the 10 most widely-distributed species found on the 120 stops on the 6 BBS routes and compares this with the previous three Brooks Bird Club forays in this county.

Table 3
Species Distribution Rank

Stops					Species	Present	Percent of Total			
	'05	'10	'15	2020			2020	'15	'10	'05
1	1	1	1		Red-eyed Vireo	75	62.5	57.9	55.8	64.6
2	5	4	2		Song Sparrow	70	58.3	41.1	31.3	45.0
3	2	2	3		American Robin	69	57.5	52.8	51.7	42.5
5	3	3	4		American Crow	66	55.0	45.8	42.1	37.9
6	10	9	5		Mourning Dove	59	49.2	24.8	22.1	32.5
7	6	10	6		Chipping Sparrow	53	44.2	23.4	28.8	28.8
11	7	8	T-7		Eastern Towhee	47	39.2	29.9	28.3	27.1
10	8	6	T-7		Common Yellowthroat	47	39.2	33.2	27.5	27.5
12	9	7	9		Red-winged Blackbird	40	33.3	33.2	25.8	25.4
3	4	5	10		Indigo Bunting	39	32.5	38.3	33.8	42.5

While running half the number of routes can't take the place of a full roster of counters, the wide variety of habitats covered helps to give a fair representation of population trends.

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348 Station Street, Apt. 7
Bridgeville, PA 15017

**Valley Falls State Park
Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Station
2020
Marion County, West Virginia**

Joey Herron

The sixteenth year of banding Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO) at Valley Falls State Park produced a total of 45 owls, which was fifteen captures above the ten-year average and ranked as the fourth highest capture total to date.

Banding began on October 8 and ended on December 9. The station operated on nineteen nights with the nets being opened for seventy-eight and one quarter hours. Eleven of the nineteen nights yielded owls with a peak capture of 15 NSWOs captured on the night of November 7, third best ever, and another 13 on November 12, fourth best ever. Seven of the eleven nights yielded multiple owls, with October 16 producing three owls, including number 400 for this banding station. A lone foreign re-trap was caught this year on the night of November 7. The amazing story on this hatch-year owl was that it was banded approximately 45 miles to the north east at a Maryland station the same morning (3:00 am) and I captured it at 10:30 pm the same day! Two other owl species were also captured this year including a red phase Eastern Screech-Owl on the night of November 7, and a Barred Owl that was previously banded in 2019, on the night of November 17. Of the 45 captures, 15 were adults, 30 were hatch year birds. Females again lead the way in captures in 2020 with 35, with 4 males and 6 unknowns.

The station had 54 visitors from four states. Fortunately, on each night with visitors owls were captured, with multiple owls captured on two of those nights. What a thrill it was for all the visitors to experience such a tiny owl in this way.

After sixteen years of banding a total of 442 NSWOs have been captured, including 32 foreign recaptures and one return. The breakdown shows a heavy advantage for females: 77 percent to 8 percent for males. The unknown category completes the last 15 percent. The adult-to-hatch-year ratio is almost even with 49 percent adult to 51 percent hatch-year individuals. The station has hosted more than sixteen hundred visitors from thirteen states and the District of Columbia.

Again, 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.

16 year totals

Females	Males	Unknown	Hatch Year	After Hatch Year	Second Year
342	33	67	227	135	80

Banding Summary for 2020

Date	NSWO caught
10/8/20	0
10/14/20	0
10/16/20	3 (#400)

10/17/20	3
10/21/20	0
10/30/20	1
11/3/20	0
11/4/20	0
11/6/20	1
11/7/20	15 (1 FR) (1 Eastern Screech-Owl)
11/12/20	13
11/13/20	3
11/14/20	1
11/17/20	0 (1 Barred Owl)
11/18/20	1
11/20/20	0
11/23/20	2
11/28/20	2
12/9/20	0
	<u>Total 45</u>

Age

After hatch year (AHY).....	11	
Second year (SY).....	4	33% (adults)
Hatch year (HY)	30	67%

Sex

Female – 35	78%
Male – 4	9%
Unknown – 6	13%

511 Ohio Ave
Fairmont, WV



NSWO #400, captured October 16, 2020
All photographs by Joey Herron.



Barred Owl



Eastern Screech Owl

List of Moths, June 2020 Preston County, West Virginia

Ryan Tomazin

I surveyed for moths from June 5 through 15 in southern Preston County. Though only two main locations were utilized for nighttime photography, they yielded a meaningful variety of species. A small number of daytime-flying moths were photographed around the county.

Most nights were spent at Terra Alta Lake. For much of the photographing, I opportunistically spent time under the mercury vapor bulb of a dusk-to-dawn light on my friend's cabin, which attracted dozens of moths per night.

Many thanks to Mike Powell and The Nature Conservancy for permitting me to set up my moth sheet at Cranesville Swamp. Though temperatures that night quickly dropped into the high-40s, keeping most moths away, it was really enjoyable. I employed a newly created backpack mothing kit, which operated a wide-range ultraviolet black light through a portable lithium battery pack. The battery option is whisper-quiet, which is preferable for the nighttime bird listener. A white cotton sheet was set up with either a rope between two trees/poles, or with thumb tacks into wood bark. The beauty of my setup is that everything I need, including books, camera and more, all fit in one light pack.

Moths identified are listed below with Hodges numbers, as well as common and/or Latin names. The numbers are unique to each species and remain attached to the species even when names or taxonomy change, making them easy to use in a number of contexts. More than ninety species were identified, with a further six individuals being narrowed down to genus or family. Diversity in moths highlights diversity in flora, as many moths are specialists attached to a small number, or even an individual, species of plant, shrub or tree.

0957 – Dotted Lefttier Moth	<i>Psilocorsis reflexella</i>
1014 – Pale Gray Bird-dropping Moth	<i>Antaeotricha leucillana</i>
1065 – no common name	<i>Martyringa latipennis</i>
2093 – Black-smudged Chionodes Moth	<i>Chionodes mediofuscella</i>
2449 – Apple Fruit Moth	<i>Argyresthia conjugella</i>
2772 – Labyrinth Moth	<i>Phaecasiophora niveiguttana</i>
Leafroller Moth type	<i>Olethreutine</i> subfamily
2823 – Banded Olethreutes Moth	<i>Olethreutes fasciatana</i>
2937 – Aster Eucosma	<i>Eucosma parmatana</i>
Unidentified moth	<i>Eucosmini</i> tribe
Unidentified moth	<i>Pseudexentera</i> genus
3367 – Oak Leaffolder Moth	<i>Ancyliis burgessiana</i>
3686 – Black-patched Clepsia	<i>Clepsia melaleucanus</i>
3748 – White-lined Leafroller	<i>Amorbia humerosana</i>
4652 – Early Button Slug Moth	<i>Tortricidia testacea</i>
4716 – Double-striped Scoparia	<i>Scoparia biplagiialis</i>
4719 – Many-spotted Eudonia Moth	<i>Scoparia basalis</i>
4738 – Striped Eudonia Moth	<i>Eudonia strigalis</i>
4958 – White-spotted Sable Moth	<i>Anania funebris</i>

5226 – Splendid Palpita	<i>Palpita magniferalis</i>
Unidentified moth	<i>Donacaula</i> genus
6235 – Lettered Habrosyne	<i>Habrosyne scripta</i>
6237 – Tufted Thyatirine Moth	<i>Pseudothyatira cymatophoroides</i>
6326 – Common Angle	<i>Macaria aemulataria</i>
6330 – Birch Angle	<i>Macaria notata</i>
6344 – Pale-marked Angle	<i>Macaria signaria</i>
6347 – White Pine Angle	<i>Macaria pinistrobata</i>
6449 – Dotted Gray	<i>Glena cribrataria</i>
6582 – Large Purplish Gray Moth	<i>Iridopsis vellivolata</i>
6588 – Bent-line Gray Moth	<i>Iridopsis larvaria</i>
6597 – Small Engrailed Moth	<i>Ectropis crepuscularia</i>
6598 – Porcelain Gray	<i>Protoaboarmia porcelaria</i>
6599 – Tulip-tree Beauty	<i>Epimecis hortaria</i>
6620 – Canadian Melanolophia	<i>Melanolophia canadaria</i>
6621 – Signate Melanolophia	<i>Melanolophia signataria</i>
6638 – Powder Moth	<i>Eufidonia notataria</i>
6639 – Sharp-lined Powder Moth	<i>Eufidonia discospilata</i>
6640 – Peppered Moth	<i>Biston betularia</i>
6666 – Bluish Spring Moth	<i>Lomographa semiclarata</i>
6667 – White Spring Moth	<i>Lomographa vestaliata</i>
6677 – Yellow-dusted Cream	<i>Cabera erythemaria</i>
6755 – Morrison’s Pero	<i>Pero morrisonaria</i>
6763 – Oak Beauty	<i>Phaeoura quernaria</i>
6796 – Pale Beauty	<i>Campaea perlata</i>
6812 – Pale Homochlodes	<i>Homochlodes fritillaria</i>
6823-25 – Metarranthis Moth	<i>Metarranthis</i> complex
6835 – Scallop Moth	<i>Cepphis armataria</i>
6837 – Alien Proboscis	<i>Proboscis alienaria</i>
6838 – Friendly Proboscis	<i>Proboscis amicaria</i>
6840 – Lemon Plagodis	<i>Plagodis serinaria</i>
6884 – Straw Bisma	<i>Bisma endropiaria</i>
6888 – Hemlock Looper	<i>Lambdina fiscellaria</i>
6894 – Curve-lined Looper	<i>Lambdina fervidaria</i>
6941 – Confused Eusarca	<i>Eusarca confusaria</i>
6964 – White Slant-line	<i>Tetracis cachexiata</i>
Unidentified moth	<i>Hydriomena</i> genus
7292 – Cherry, or Ferguson’s, Scallop Shell	<i>Rheumaptera prunivorata</i>
7399 – Sharp-angled Carpet	<i>Euphyia intermediata</i>
7420 – no common name	<i>Hydrelia condensata</i>
7422 – Unadorned Carpet Moth	<i>Hydrelia inornata</i>
7430 – White-striped Black Moth	<i>Trichodezia albovittata</i>
7459 – Columbian Eupithecia (Pug)	<i>Eupithecia columbiata</i>
7647 – Three-spotted Phillip	<i>Heterophleps triguttaria</i>
7648 – Bad-wing Moth	<i>Dyspteris abortivaria</i>
7650 – Gray Scoopwing Moth	<i>Callizzia amorata</i>
7715 – Rosy Maple Moth	<i>Dryocampa rubicunda</i>

7746 – Io Moth	<i>Automeris io</i>
7758 – Luna Moth	<i>Actias luna</i>
7990 – White-blotched <i>Heterocampa</i>	<i>Heterocampa umbrata</i>
8098 – Little White Lichen Moth	<i>Clemensia albata</i>
8129 – Isabella Tiger Moth	<i>Pyrrharctia isabella</i>
8137 – Virginian Tiger Moth	<i>Spilosoma virginica</i>
8211 – Hickory Tussock Moth	<i>Lophocampa caryae</i>
8338 – Dark-banded Owlet	<i>Phalaenophana pyramusalis</i>
8348 – Grayish Zanclognatha (Fan-foot) Moth	<i>Zanclognatha pedipilalis</i>
8351 – Early Zanclognatha (Fan-foot) Moth	<i>Zanclognatha cruralis</i>
8355 – Morbid Owlet	<i>Chytolita morbidalis</i>
8393 – Ambiguous Moth	<i>Lascoria ambigualis</i>
8442 – Baltimore Bomolocha (Snout) Moth	<i>Hypena baltimoralis</i>
8448 – Sordid Bomolocha Moth	<i>Hypena sordidula</i>
8465 – Green Cloverworm Moth	<i>Hypena scabra</i>
8727 – Maple Looper Moth	<i>Parallelia bistriaris</i>
8745 – Texas Mocis Moth	<i>Mocis texana</i>
8952 – Connected Looper	<i>Plusia contexta</i>
8992 – Three-spotted Nola Moth	<i>Nola triquetrana</i>
9065 – Green <i>Leuconycta</i> Moth	<i>Leuconycta diptheroides</i>
9203 – Fingered Dagger	<i>Acronicta dactylina</i>
9272 – Smearred Dagger	<i>Acronicta oblinita</i>
9341 – Airy <i>Apamea</i>	<i>Apamea vultuosa</i>
9546 – Olive Angle Shades	<i>Phlogophora iris</i>
9678 – Variegated Midget	<i>Elaphria versicolor</i>
10292 – Hitched Arches Moth	<i>Melanchra adjuncta</i>
10459 – Unarmed Wainscot Moth	<i>Leucania inermis</i>
10587 – Cynical Quaker Moth	<i>Orthodes cynica</i>
10942 – Lesser Black-letter Dart Moth	<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>
19461 – Gypsy Moth	<i>Lymantria dispar</i>

Thank you to Sue Olcott for her assistance in checking over this list and with her identifications of a few troublesome moths.

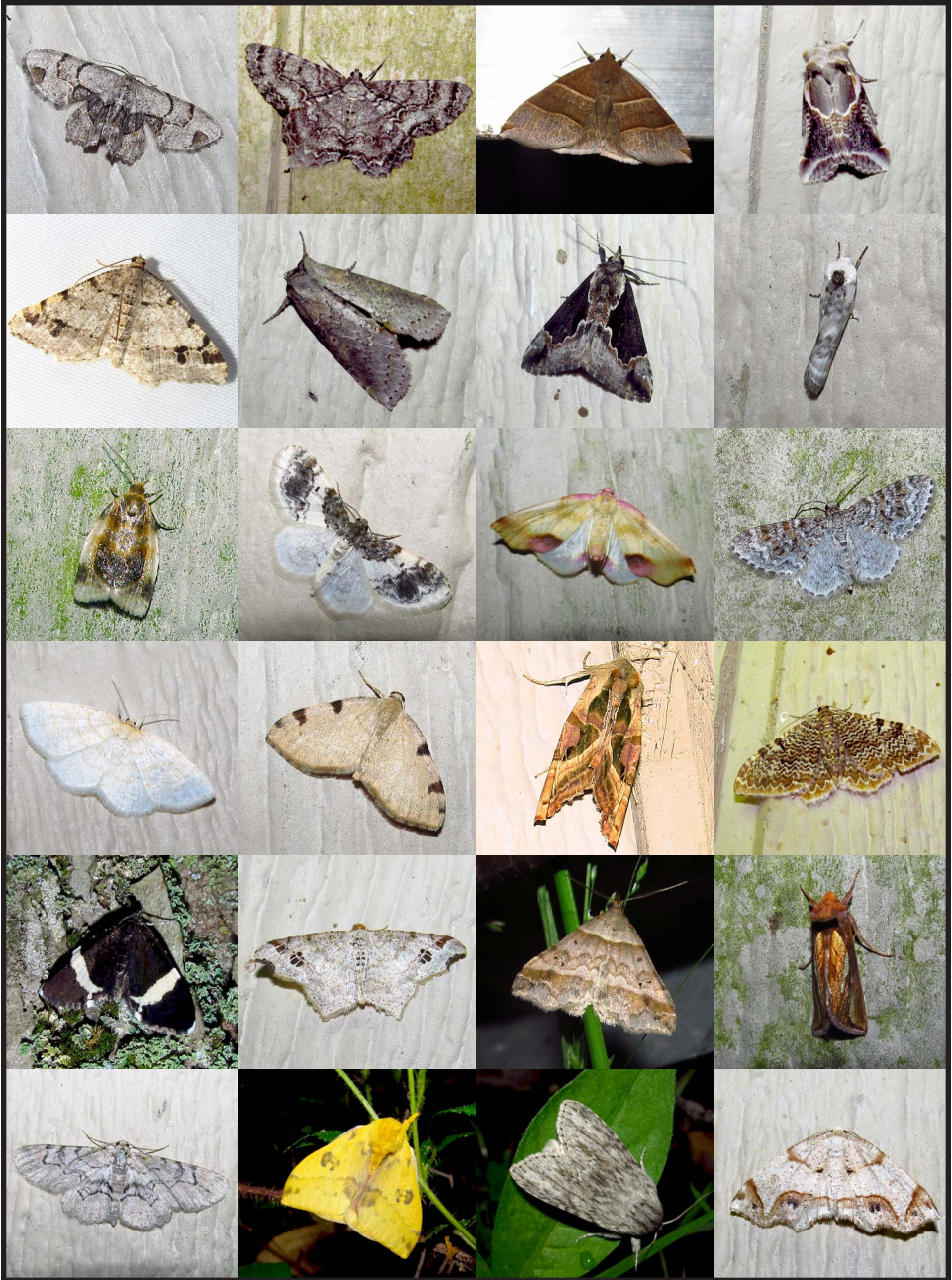
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From top, l to r: Gray Scoopwing, Tulip-tree Beauty, Maple Looper Moth, Lettered Habrosyne, White Pine Angle, Tufted Thyatirine Moth, Baltimore Snout, Pale Gray Bird-dropping Moth, Black-patched Clepsia, Powder Moth, Lemon Plagodis, Unadorned Carpet Moth, Yellow-dusted Cream, Three-spotted Phillip, Olive Angle Shade, Cherry Scallop Shell, White-striped Black, Birch Angle Moth, Dark-banded Owlet, Connected Looper, Bent-line Gray, Io Moth, Smear-dagger, and Alien Proboscis. Photos by Ryan Tomazin. See <http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/the-redstart.html> for color photos.

eBird Report
Summer 2020
June 1–August 31

Mike Slaven

June sees a shift in bird behavior. The big waves of warbler migration have mostly settled down, with much of the springtime singing over as birds work on raising their young. In spite of this quieter time in the birding year, during the summer of COVID-19, birding statewide nonetheless grew as numbers of people took to the field, watched backyard feeders, and roamed the woods and shorelines as a safe form of social distancing. As an eBird reviewer, I was pleased to see so many new names showing up in the eBird lists. Of course, many of the new birders were starting from scratch and were venturing out without much more guidance than maybe a field guide and a pair of binoculars.

As one would expect, there were a few misidentifications, as for example the birder who reported a European Goldfinch. (I later found out that this person was relying on a field guide to United Kingdom birds). As reviewer, I tried to help these new birders come to more accurate identifications and I must say the birders responded with perfect cooperation and over time the lists they submitted became much improved. I hope these birders continue to persist in their efforts and find the pleasure that birding can bring. If you see new birders in the field, it never hurts to gently encourage them (at a safe distance for the time being).

As the field notes in this issue give a blow-by-blow list of birds seen, I am instead going to mention a few notable sightings and talk a little about eBird and its ability to collect records of these birds for further study.

June was pretty typical as far as warbler observations both in numbers and variety. Although most breeding warblers in the state have paired off and gone nearly silent by June, one of the specialty birds that draws attention from birders and birding tours from all over the world is the **Swainson's Warbler**. These small, active birds regularly sing all through June, which make the otherwise difficult-to-spot bird conspicuous. This June and July, at least 25 reports of this species were recorded in eBird. It was most dependably spotted in Fayette County along Fern Creek on the Endless Wall Trail, but was reported at other locations including Nicholas, Preston, and Raleigh Counties. There are a few other warblers that sing into June, especially at higher elevations. Seneca Rocks, for example, can provide a good early summer experience with still-vocalizing **Worm-eating Warblers**, (101 eBird records from West Virginia from June 1 to August 31), and **Pine Warblers** (108 West Virginia eBird reports during the summer 2020 season in Pendleton County. **Mourning Warblers** also sing at the higher elevations of the Allegheny Mountains. In addition to these regular state breeding birds, some notable state rarities also made appearances.

This past summer was generally pretty warm, and the effects of the heat made some birds scarcer than usual, but there were some genuinely unusual birds for West Virginia that compensated for that. Reports of **Sedge Wrens** just off Golf Course Road in Tucker County began to filter in during May, and from June 1–July 6, there were 62 separate reports of the wrens in the Canaan Valley area. I was lucky enough to go there and had the thrill of finding a new bird for me in the state. The wrens were not only present but appeared to have possibly bred, too.

The first week of July also marked the arrival of **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** at Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area in Barbour County. They were spotted several times over the next week, and the six birds gave observers some good looks. By the time of the last sighting of these ducks on July 9, 42 separate eBird lists reported them. For some reason, from the end of May through the beginning of July seems to be when there is a small but real chance of spotting this species. There was one report from May 2020 (outside the scope of this report's date range) and the species previously appeared in June 2015 in Randolph County as well.

Sometimes migratory birds that are not all that rare in the winter are seen in the summer, far out of season. A good example of this phenomenon was the Lesser Scaup that was reported on the Monongahela River in Morgantown, Monongalia County, around Edith Barill Park. It was reported and seen by nine observers from July 11 to August 31. In the winter, an observation of 100 would not be too rare, but even one in the summertime is an oddity. An out-of-place visitor raises many questions. Is the bird injured? Sick? A failed breeder? Sometimes the question can be answered, but often it remains a mystery.

By the end of August a few shorebirds begin to filter back through West Virginia after long summers in the Arctic. The first arrivals tend to be birds who failed to breed, or who lost their broods to predation. These early birds are followed by successful breeders, and finally by first-year birds. If you want to explore a fascinating but highly technical article, with really good charts and graphs, I recommend reading "Long-distance migratory shorebirds travel faster towards their breeding grounds, but fly faster post-breeding" in *Scientific Reports*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-019-45862-0>. It explains how departure dates for southern migration ramp up over time. This sequenced migration is timed both to maximize defenses against predation by Cooper's Hawks, Merlins, Peregrine Falcons, and other raptors as well as to give the most vulnerable young birds a little longer to put on weight for the rigors of migration. 2020 was a relatively good year to see a variety of these returnees, from late June right through August and into the fall, with a good variety if not huge numbers of birds seen. Summer shorebird watching can be quite fun, and there is a great deal of satisfaction in seeing the birds that make only brief stops in the state. If you go and tramp around marshes, or wander through fields during summer, please remember to respect the property rights of landowners and wear tick resistant clothing, insect repellent, and sunscreen.

One striking thing about the eBird data I have seen from last summer is that the maps of observation from the field show that almost all of the lists come from a handful of birding sites. These are obviously good places to bird and show where many species may be found. They are also telling in another way. They are not just maps of bird sightings, they are records of where birders are, and where they go. I have written about this before, but it is striking me to me more than one county had no bird lists at all submitted last summer. Not one. Some counties are inexplicably unexplored by birders. Clay County, conveniently located practically in the center of the state with an interstate going through it has an all-time bird list of 97, according to eBird. It would be nice to see that number go into the triple digits, to at least give researchers some data to add to their pool of knowledge. I hope to nudge a few of you to make lists for Clay County, and Wirt County, too. These are the sub-100 species count counties, and I think that does not accurately reflect the real bird diversity there. As a last thought, so many Brooks Bird Club members have so much accumulated wisdom, so much experience, and such a commitment to birds

and birding, that if you do not already use eBird please consider adding your lists to the database to help scientists preserve, protect and understand the complex ways that weather, environment, habitat and human intervention impacts avian species. Thank you for reading this, and I hope to encounter you in the field soon.

632 West Virginia Avenue
Morgantown, WV 26501

Field Notes
Summer Season
June 1 – August 31, 2020

Casey Rucker

June was slightly cooler than average, while July and August were warmer than usual in West Virginia, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. June and August were wetter than average, while July was drier than usual, with a moderate drought in northern areas of the state.

These notes were gathered from the West Virginia Birds Listserv, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, from bird-count results, and from field notes submitted to the editor by email and regular mail. The full content of the submitted notes by the contributors to the WV Listserv may be viewed by visiting the archives at the following website: <http://list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html>. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, for the first time since 1940 there was no Foray held during June, and for the first time since 1966 the North American Breeding Bird Survey was cancelled.

A new breeding species was added to the West Virginia list on August 22, when a *fledgling* **Red Crossbill**, not yet capable of sustained flight, was discovered in the presence of its parents in a grove of Eastern White Pines in Watoga State Park, Pocahontas County, as reported by Richard Bailey. The new record is described in an article on pages 2 and 3 of this issue. The discovery of a **Sedge Wren** in Canaan Valley State Park, Tucker County, at the end of May led to many observations of as many as seven **Sedge Wrens** through July 6 (RBo, SF, CR, RB, HMy, WH). Six **Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks** attracted many birders to Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area, Barbour County, beginning on July 1, when Joe Hildreth saw them after being alerted by an eBird report of Annie Harmon. At least three of the birds remained through July 8 (JH, TB, GR, AG, MO, LS, FA). On July 22, Richard Gregg discovered the state's first white form Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias occidentalis*) at Marmet Lock and Dam, Kanawha County, where the bird was observed sporadically through August 21. There were 191 species reported in 35 West Virginia counties this season; it should be noted that many breeding birds are not reported in summer.

Ducks, Swans, and Geese – The **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** who appeared in early July at Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area, Barbour County, are reported in the previous paragraph. **Canada Geese** were as usual widely reported. The **Tundra Swan**



Black-bellied Whistling Ducks.
Photograph by David Patick.

at the Mill Creek water treatment plant remained through late July, as reported by Rodney Bartgis. **Wood Ducks** and **Mallards** made their customary appearances on breeding grounds throughout the state. On August 31, James and Judy Phillips found seven **Blue-winged Teal**, a **Northern Shoveler**, and two **Green-winged Teal** at Durr's Pond near Princeton, Mercer County. **Blue-winged Teal** were also observed in Jefferson (JBz) and Mason (MG, JK) Counties, while **American Black Ducks** appeared

in Kanawha (HG) and Tucker (CR) Counties. The **Ring-necked Duck** reported since the previous winter by James Phillips remained in Pipestem, Summers County, through early August. **Common Mergansers** were found in Pocahontas County (KB), and were seen *with ducklings* in Berkeley (AT) and Pendleton (HMy) Counties.

Grouse and **Turkeys** – **Ruffed Grouse** were observed in Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (RB) Counties. Observers reported **Wild Turkeys** in nine counties; on July 22 Cynthia Burkhart encountered a hen **Wild Turkey** *with six poults* crossing Route 16 in Pleasants County.

Grebes – On August 28, Donny Good found a **Pied-billed Grebe** on Boley Lake in Babcock State Park, Fayette County.

Pigeons and **Doves** – **Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** continue to reside throughout the state, as reported sporadically. Rodney Bartgis visited the resident **Eurasian Collared-Doves** in Union, Monroe County, on June 30.

Cuckoos – Reports of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** continued a strong pattern from the past two summers, with observations in sixteen counties, while contributors reported **Black-billed Cuckoos** in only four counties: Preston (RTo), Ritchie (DG), Roane (DG), and Tucker (HMy).

Goatsuckers and **Swifts** – Reports of **Common Nighthawks** began in late July, from Kanawha (HG), Mercer (JeH), Pleasants (BM), Pocahontas (KB), Putnam (KK), Randolph (RBi), Ritchie (CB), Summers (JJP), Tucker (EG), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (TB) Counties. Kim Kazmierski counted 153 **Common Nighthawks** heading east over Hurricane, Putnam County, on August 26. Gary Rankin visited the Mt. Zion Cemetery in Mason County on June 20 and was rewarded by the calls of both **Chuck-will's-widow** and **Eastern Whip-poor-wills**. Likely due in part to the cancellation of the Breeding Bird Survey, the only other reports of **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** were from Preston County (RTo) and Canaan Valley, Tucker County (CR, SA). Summer **Chimney Swift** reports came from only nine counties this summer: Jefferson (BT, JBz), Kanawha (RG, HG), Monroe (RB), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo), Putnam (KK), Randolph (RB), Summers (JP), and Wood (TB).

Hummingbirds – Birders in ten counties reported sightings of **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**.

Rails and Coots – Virginia Rails were discovered in Altona Marsh, Jefferson County (BT), Canaan Valley, Tucker County (CR), and Belleville Wetlands, Wood County (TB). One of the **Common Gallinules** observed during May at McClintic Wildlife Management Area, Mason County, was found on June 23 by Carlton Schooley.

Avocets – Two **American Avocets** were observed near Waverly, Wood County, in mid-August, as reported by Terry Bronson.

Plovers – Killdeer appeared in reports from nine counties. David Patick found a **Semipalmated Plover** at Apple Grove Fish Hatchery, Mason County, on August 30.

Sandpipers – **Sandpiper** diversity was up a bit this summer in West Virginia, with thirteen species reported. **Spotted** and **Solitary sandpipers** were reported in six and eight counties, respectively. Other **sandpipers** were observed in the following counties by the contributors listed: **Sanderling**: Cabell (JsH, DP), **Least Sandpipers**: Barbour (RBo), Mason (DP, GR, MG, JK), Randolph (RB), and Wood (TB), **White-rumped** and **Pectoral sandpipers**: Mason (DP, MG), **Semipalmated Sandpiper**: Mason (MG, JK, DP), **Short-billed Dowitcher**: Barbour (FA) and Mason (DP), **American Woodcock**: Monongalia (LS), Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (CR), **Lesser Yellowlegs**: Barbour (RBo), and Mason (MG, JK, DP), **Willet**: Wood (TB), **Greater Yellowlegs**: Barbour (FA, RBo) and Summers (JJP), and **Wilson’s Phalarope**: Mason (DP).

Gulls and Terns – Josh Holland spotted a first summer **Laughing Gull** on July 3 in Huntington, Cabell County, and two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on August 31. **Herring Gulls** were reported only in Mason (DP) and Wood (TB) Counties. **Forster’s Terns** appeared at the Apple Grove Fish Hatchery in Mason County at the beginning of the summer, as observed by Josh Holland on June 10, and at the end, as discovered by David Patick on August 29.

Loons – James and Judy Phillips spotted a **Common Loon** on the Bluestone River, Summers County, on June 15, and continued to see perhaps the same bird in the vicinity through July 8.



American Bittern.
Photograph by Jim Triplett.

Cormorants – Double-crested Cormorants appeared in Jefferson (JBz), Kanawha (RG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP), Pocahontas (KB), and Summers (JP) Counties this summer.

Bitterns, Herons, and Egrets – The white form **Great Blue Heron** found by Richard Gregg at Marmet Lock and Dam, Kanawha County, in late July, is described near the beginning of these notes. Jim Triplett saw and photographed an **American Bittern** in Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Tucker County, on August 10. **Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Green Herons** appeared throughout much of the state. Jeff Hajenga discovered a **Green Heron nest** on Jimmy Lewis Lake, Mercer County, on June 26. On July 8, James and Judy Phillips spotted two juvenile **Little Blue Herons** in Bluestone State Park, Summers County. On August 9, Gary Rankin, Michael Griffith, Janet Keating, and Joshua Holland

saw an immature **Black-crowned Night-Heron** flying downriver past Shady Waters Campground, Mason County.

Vultures – Birders in only seven counties reported **Black Vultures**, while seventeen counties boasted **Turkey Vulture** reports.

Hawks and Eagles – **Osprey** reports were widespread this summer, coming from twelve counties. Donna Mitchell was treated to a **Swallow-tailed Kite** flying near her home in Barbour County on July 21. As often, the only **Northern Harriers** of



Green Heron with bullfrog tadpole.
Photograph by Jim Triplett.

the season were observed flying low over Canaan Valley, Tucker County (CR, HMy). James and Judy Phillips spotted an adult **Golden Eagle** above the Highland Scenic Highway, Pocahontas County, on June 9. **Accipiter** reports were up this summer, with **Sharp-shinned Hawks** seen in Calhoun (TF), Grant (FA), Mercer (JP), Randolph (RB), and Summers (JP) Counties, and **Cooper's Hawks** in Kanawha (RG), Mason (DP), Preston (LS), Putnam (KK), Randolph (RB), Summers (JP), and Wood (TB) Counties. During mid-July Thomas Fox watched a pair of **Sharp-shinned Hawks** *feeding and training two fledglings to fly* at his home in Millstone, Calhoun County. Birders in many parts of the state reported **Bald Eagles**, **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **Broad-winged Hawks**, and **Red-tailed Hawks**. The Putnam County pair of **Mississippi Kites** were *on the nest* in Scott Depot in early August, as observed by Laura Ceperley on August 4.

Owls – **Owl** reports were scanty as usual this summer. Terry Bronson saw three *nestlings* of the pair of **Barn Owls** in Belleville, Wood County, on June 27. **Eastern Screech-Owls** were noted only in Randolph (RB), Summers (JP), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. James Phillips reported the season's only **Great Horned Owls**, from his home in Pipestem, Summers County. **Barred Owls** were observed in Hardy (RB), Jefferson (EK, JBz), Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (RB), Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB), Tucker (WH, HMy), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. On August 31 Joette Borzik enjoyed the diurnal countersinging of two **Barred Owls** along Bloomery Road, Jefferson County. The editor of these notes heard a **Long-eared Owl** calling in his yard in Dry Fork, Tucker County, on July 14.

Kingfishers – There were reports of **Belted Kingfisher** from nine West Virginia counties this summer.

Woodpeckers – **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**, **Downy Woodpeckers**, **Hairy Woodpeckers**, **Northern Flickers**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** all appeared in their usual haunts. Once again, the most sparsely reported **woodpecker** was **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, with reports only from Pendleton County (RB), Preston County (RTo), Randolph County (RB), and Tucker County (HMy). On June 9 Bruni Haydl watched a male **Pileated Woodpecker** *feeding his fledgling* in her yard in Charles Town, Jefferson County.

Falcons – American Kestrels

inspired reports in Grant (FA), Pendleton (RB), Preston (RTo), Pocahontas (SK), Randolph (RB), and Wood (TB) Counties this summer. Records of breeding **Merlins** continue: one from Oglebay Park in Ohio County, where Debby Koegler saw two adults and *two fledglings* on July 2, and the other from Elkins, Randolph County, with a report of *fledglings* from Randy Bodkins on July 10. Kitty Bailey and Sharon Kearns found a **Merlin** in Cranberry Glades Botanical



Juvenile Bald Eagle, Freeland Road, Canaan Valley.
Photograph by Jim Triplett.

Area, Pocahontas County on August 21. **Peregrine Falcons** were seen in Putnam (RG), Summers (JP), and Wood (TB) Counties.

Flycatchers – Great Crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Woodpeewees, Acadian Flycatchers, and Eastern Phoebes were all widely reported in the state. The following *Empidonax* species were reported in the counties and by the contributors listed: **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: Mason (DP), **Alder Flycatchers**: Pocahontas (DP), Preston (LS), and Tucker (HMy, WH, MA), **Willow Flycatchers**: Berkeley (AT), Jefferson (BT), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (LS), Randolph (RB), Tucker (HMy, CR), and Wood (TB), and **Least Flycatchers**: Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo) and Tucker (HMy). Herb and Sarah Myers encountered a **Least Flycatcher** singing in the Red Creek Campground in Dolly Sods, Tucker County, on June 15.

Vireos – White-eyed, Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, and Red-eyed vireos appeared in nesting grounds throughout the state. **Warbling Vireo** reports were scarce this summer, coming from Hardy (RB), Jefferson (EK), Kanawha (HG), Pendleton (HMy, RB), Preston (RTo), and Summers (JP) Counties.

Crows, Jays, and Ravens – Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens were reported in their usual territories. Surprisingly, the only report of **Fish Crows** was from Hampshire County, where Sam Chapman saw a flock of 50 calling birds flying over Romney on August 30.

Swallows – Bank Swallows were seen only at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County (GR, MG, JK), on August 9. **Tree Swallows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Barn Swallows, and Cliff Swallows** were the subject of summer reports from many areas of West Virginia. **Purple Martins** prompted reports from Jefferson County (BT), Kanawha County (RG), Summers County (JP), and Wood County (TB). On June 16, Hullet Good counted twenty **Cliff Swallow** *nests* under the bridge over the Elk River in Big Chimney, Kanawha County.

Chickadees and Titmice – Carolina and Black-capped chickadees occasioned reports in their respective territories in West Virginia. **Tufted Titmice** were widely reported throughout the state.

Nuthatches – Red-breasted Nuthatches appeared in reports from Grant (FA), Marion (AW), Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (DP, JJP), Randolph (RB),

and Tucker (HMy) Counties. **White-breasted Nuthatches** were the subject of many reports statewide this season.

Creepers – Reports of **Brown Creeper** this summer were from Monongalia (LS), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (LeJ, LS), and Tucker (HMy) Counties.

Wrens – The **Sedge Wrens** that lingered through June in Canaan Valley State Park are described near the beginning of these notes. **House** and **Carolina wrens** appeared in reports from many parts of the state. **Winter Wrens** were reported in Pocahontas (DP), Preston (LS), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (HMy) Counties.

Gnatcatchers – Reports of **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** in their usual breeding grounds came from locations throughout the state.

Kinglets – **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were reported in Pendleton County (RB), Preston County (RTo), Randolph County (RB), and Tucker County (HMy).

Thrushes – Six breeding species of **thrush** appeared in West Virginia reports this summer. **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Wood Thrushes**, and **American Robins** were again seen throughout the state. Reports of **Veery** came from Pocahontas (JP), Preston (RTo), Randolph (HMy), Summers (JP), and Tucker (HMy) Counties, of **Swainson's Thrush** from Randolph (RB) and Tucker (CR) Counties, and of **Hermit Thrush** from Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (DP), Preston (RTo, LS), Randolph (HMy), and Tucker (HMy) Counties.

Catbirds, Thrashers, and Mockingbirds – **Gray Catbirds**, **Brown Thrashers**, and **Northern Mockingbirds** prompted reports from breeding grounds throughout the state.

Starlings – **European Starlings** continued to occupy widespread habitats throughout our state.

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwings** inspired many West Virginia birders this summer, with reports from eleven counties.

Weaver Finches – The **House Sparrow** continues throughout the state, with reports from six counties.

Finches and Allies – The first record of *breeding Red Crossbills* in West Virginia, at Watoga State Park in Pocahontas County, is described at the beginning of these notes. **House Finches** were reported from Jefferson (BT), Kanawha (RG), Monroe (RB), Randolph (RB), and Summers (JP) Counties; **Purple Finches** from Grant (FA), Pocahontas (DP), Randolph (HMy), and Tucker (CR, HMy) Counties; and **Red Crossbills** only from Pocahontas County (DP, RBi). On June 1, Randy Bodkins hosted the only reported **Pine Siskins** of the season at his feeders in Norton, Randolph County. **American Goldfinches** inspired reports from many areas of the state.

Sparrows, Juncos, and Towhees – **Chipping Sparrows**, **Field Sparrows**, **Song Sparrows**, and **Eastern Towhees** were all widely reported in West Virginia this summer. Rodney Bartgis found the only reported **Vesper Sparrows** of the season, on June 7 near Onego, Pendleton County; many observers found **Henslow's Sparrows** along Beech Run, Preston County, in June and July. The editor of these notes was surprised by an early **Lincoln's Sparrow** in Canaan Valley State Park, Tucker County, on August 23. The following **sparrows** were reported only in the counties listed: **Grasshopper** in Pendleton (RB), Preston (RTo), and Tucker (HMy), **Dark-eyed Junco** in Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (JP), Preston (RTo, LS), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (HMy), **Savannah** in Pendleton (RB), Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (HMy), and **Swamp** in Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB) and Tucker (HMy).

Chats – **Yellow-breasted Chat** reports were up this summer, coming from

Jefferson (EK), Kanawha (HG), Monongalia (LS), Monroe (JP), Pendleton (HMy), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo, LS), and Wayne (GR) Counties.

Blackbirds and **Allies** – It was a good summer for **Icterids**. David Daniels discovered a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** on August 17 in Reedsville, Preston County. The **Western Meadowlark** that appeared in the same vicinity in Preston County this spring remained until at least June 13 (RTo). **Bobolinks** inspired reports from Grant (FA), Jefferson (DHa), Pendleton (RB), Preston (LS), Randolph (RB) and Tucker (HMy) Counties this summer, and **Eastern Meadowlarks** from Jefferson (BT), Mason (GR, MG, JK), Monroe (JP), Pendleton (HMy), Pocahontas (KB), Randolph (RB), Tucker (HMy), and Wood (TB) Counties. **Orchard** and **Baltimore orioles**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Common Grackles** were reported widely this summer.

Warblers – It was a respectable summer for **warbler** reports, with 29 species of breeding **warbler** observed in West Virginia. **Warbler** species reported in five or fewer counties are listed below with the counties and contributors. Species simply listed were reported in at least six counties. Our summer **warblers** included **Ovenbird**, **Worm-eating** – Hardy (RB), Mercer (JP), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo), and Pendleton (HMy), **Louisiana Waterthrush**, **Northern Waterthrush** – Barbour (RBr), Pocahontas (JP, DP), Preston (LS), and Randolph (RB), **Golden-winged** – Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo), and Tucker (SF, HMy, RB, JTr), **Blue-winged** – Pocahontas (KB), Preston (RTo) and Randolph (RB), **Black-and-white**, **Prothonotary** – Wood (TB), **Tennessee** – Grant (FA) and Randolph (RBo), **Nashville** – Grant (FA), **Mourning** – Pendleton (RB) and Randolph (RB), **Kentucky** – Jefferson (EK), Ohio (PM), and Preston (RTo), **Common Yellowthroat**, **Hooded**, **American Redstart**, **Cape May** – Grant (FA), **Cerulean** – Morgan (EK), Pendleton (HMy), Preston (RTo), Summers (JP), and Wood (TB), **Northern Parula**, **Magnolia**, **Blackburnian**, **Yellow**, **Chestnut-sided**, **Black-throated Blue**, **Pine** – Hardy (RB) and Pendleton (HMy), **Yellow-rumped**, **Yellow-throated** – Monroe (JP), Pendleton (HMy), Preston (RTo), and Summers (JP), **Prairie** – Kanawha (HG) and Preston (RTo), **Black-throated Green**, and **Canada** – Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (JP), Preston (RTo), Randolph (RB), and Tucker (HMy). On June 19 Nancy and Elliott Kirschbaum encountered eleven singing **Cerulean Warblers** at Eidolon Preserve, Morgan County.

Tanagers, **Cardinals**, **Grosbeaks**, and **Buntings** – **Summer Tanager** reports were down again this summer, coming only from Kanawha (HG) and Mason (DP) Counties. **Scarlet Tanagers**, **Northern Cardinals**, and **Indigo Buntings** prompted numerous reports from birders in most parts of the state. **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** appeared in reports from Pendleton (RB), Pocahontas (KB), Preston (LeJ), Randolph (RBi, RB), Summers (JP), and Tucker (HMy) Counties. **Blue Grosbeaks** were seen in Fayette (SWi), Jefferson (DHa), Mason (GR, MG, JK), Raleigh (SWi), Wayne (GR), and Wood (JB) Counties; on August 12 Deborah Hale watched a pair of **Blue Grosbeaks** *feeding their fledglings* in Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County.

Contributors to the Summer Field Notes: Marcia Anderson (MA), Sarah Anderson (SA), Frederick Atwood (FA), Richard Bailey (RBi), Rodney Bartgis (RB), Jon Benedetti (JB), Randy Bodkins (RBo), Joette Borzik (JBz), Ross Brittain (RBr), Terry Bronson (TB), Cynthia Burkhardt (CB), Sandra Farkas (SF), Tom Fox (TF), Elaine George (EG), Donny Good (DG), Hullet Good (HG), LeJay Graffious (LeJ), Aaron Graham (AG), Richard Gregg (RG), Michael Griffith (MG), Jeff Hajenga (JeH), Deborah

Hale (DHa), Wil Hershberger (WH), Joseph Hildreth (JH), Joshua Holland (JsH), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), Kim Kazmierski (KK), Sharon Kearns (SK), Janet Keating (JK), Elliott Kirschbaum (EK), Beth Mankins (BM), Paul McKay (PM), Herb Myers (HMy), Matt Orsie (MO), David Patick (DP), James Phillips (JP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), Casey Rucker (CR), Larry Schwab (LS), Bill and Carole Telfair (BT), Ryan Tomazin (RTo), Alex Tsiatsos (AT), James Triplett (JTr), Andy Weaks (AW), and Steven Wilson (SWi).

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ERRATUM

Subsequent to publication of the article “Brown-headed Nuthatches, Brooke County, West Virginia: a new state bird from 1919,” which appeared in *The Redstart*, Volume 85, No. 4, the editor’s research has found that George Miksch Sutton later retracted his report of Brown-headed Nuthatches in Brooke County. In Volume 3 of *The Cardinal*, published in January 1933 by the Audubon Society of the Sewickley Valley [Pennsylvania], Sutton’s article, “Birds of the West Virginia Panhandle,” includes a bracketed entry that reads as follows:

Sitta pusilla. Brown-headed Nuthatch. The inclusion of this species in my earlier list (1920, p. 18) is a scarcely explainable error. The birds may have been Red-breasted Nuthatches seen in a poor light.

References

- Sutton, G. M. 1920. Annotated List of the Birds of Brooke County, West Virginia. *Oologist* 37:76–80. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924069174203;view=1up;seq=274>.
- Sutton, G. M. 1933. Birds of the West Virginia Panhandle. *Cardinal* 3:101–124.

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May 8	Migratory Bird Day	
Dec. 14–Jan. 5, 2021	Christmas Bird Count.....	Statewide

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2022 Foray TBD

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