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The **REDSTART**

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The REDSTART

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| Contents | Page |
|--|-------------|
| Wild Changes in Bethesda, Ohio —Rosemary Campbell..... | 46 |
| Banding at Prickett’s Fort, Marion County, West Virginia, Spring and Fall 2017 —Joey Herron | 48 |
| Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding at Valley Falls State Park, West Virginia —Joey Herron | 51 |
| 22 nd Report of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee, March 2018 —Joseph Hildreth..... | 53 |
| 2017 Floyd Bartley Memorial Award Announced | 57 |
| Book Review —Michael Breiding..... | 58 |
| eBird Reports and News —Michael Slaven | 61 |
| Field Notes —Casey Rucker..... | 63 |
| Index for Volume 84 | 72 |

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Wild Changes in Bethesda, Ohio

Rosemary Campbell

As a youngster in Bethesda, Ohio, in the 1940s and 1950s, I lived in a rather different world than we have today. Most of the population was rural and lived on small multi-crop farms. Each farm had several grain or grass crops and there was always a fallow field. These fields were divided by bushy, brushy fencerows, making a corridor for wildlife to travel from one area to another.

Hawks and owls were considered a nuisance and possible poultry predators, so were shot.

There were NO deer. When I was fourteen years old, a deer was seen in our county and it was written about in the newspaper!

I'd never seen a turkey, coyote or a beaver in the wild. But we had lots of rabbits, squirrels, bobwhite quail and even a few pheasants. (I have a picture of my Father and some of his cousins taken in our back field; five men with three pheasants and seven cottontails.)

On my morning walk to pasture after the cows, I heard the bright notes of Field Sparrows. In the meadows, the sprightly “bob-bob WHITE!” call of quail rang from the hayfields. Many times, a quail nest was found while mowing hay and if the little quail hen was hurt, we'd bring the tiny eggs in and hatch them under banty hens.

But now, the bushy fencerows are gone. The small grains are seldom grown here. Raptors are protected and numerous with less cover for small prey to hide in.

Our mixed hardwood forests have been fragmented and where we once heard the drumming of Ruffed Grouse, there are few or none in our area. They, along with nearly all small game, had benefitted from the fence rows and a field left fallow. There are fallow places now, but some have been long neglected and have grown up in invasive species that are not of much use to wildlife.

On a spring or summer night, we could almost count on hearing a whip-poor-will or a screech owl, sometimes one of the larger owls; (all known to me then as “hoot owls”). I haven't heard a whip-poor-will here at home for thirty years.

We still do have the Barred, Great Horned, and a few Eastern Screech-Owls. Rarely a Long-eared Owl will be found, but today's big metal buildings are no homes for the once-common Barn Owl. As a youngster, I saw Barn Owls in silos, barns and even an abandoned old brick church.

On any walk, we'd likely find a box turtle. They were seldom hurt by smaller machinery or cutter-bar mowers. Now the new machinery mows as close as a lawn mower and any turtle who goes under a haybine is history.

A sight I once saw as a child was a crabapple tree with several dead nestlings impaled on the thorns. I took my Dad to see where “the little birds had flown into a tree so hard they stuck” and he told me about the butcher birds, Loggerhead Shrikes. He said they often stored food, small birds, grasshoppers, etc. that way. Shrikes are now an uncommon sight.

But we've had some great successes too. The once-scarce Eastern Bluebird has made a comeback, mostly because of man-made bird houses. Grassland species are thriving.

In areas that were stripped for coal, reclaimed, and are now vast pastures, the Short-eared Owls, Bobolinks, Savannah and Vesper Sparrows, and Upland Sandpipers have found a home. The exploding deer population made fine sport for hunters and has caused

the return of a few larger predators such as coyotes and bobcats.

Knowledge about DDT has helped the Bald Eagle population rebound. An eagle or two may be found in almost any part of the state now. There are many more raptors of most species since they are protected.

We still have a long way to go teaching the public about sprays, chemicals and other harmful problems for wildlife. Highways are probably danger number one for most wild species today. Wind turbines, brightly-lit high-rise buildings and towers are the death of many small passerines.

As our own species grows more numerous and more land is developed, our wild neighbors are crowded into smaller areas. Some truly wild creatures have now become urban, so that a coyote, opossum, skunk, or raccoon is sometimes found in town. City parks have more squirrels than the woods!

It behooves us, as the top predator, to live kindly with our fellow creatures. If treated wisely, they enrich our lives and are here for our enjoyment.

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Banding at Prickett's Fort State Park, Marion County, West Virginia Spring and Fall 2017

Joey Herron

During the spring and fall 2017 season, 108 birds of 34 species were banded, making 2017 the best year for total bandings. Three birds from previous bandings, a Warbling Vireo, an Orchard Oriole, and an Indigo Bunting, were recaptured. Five new species were added to the species list this year, including an Acadian Flycatcher, an Eastern Phoebe, a Dark-eyed Junco, eight Tennessee Warblers, and a Yellow-throated Warbler, bringing the species total to 69. It was an especially good year for Tennessee Warblers (8 captures) and Baltimore Orioles (12 captures).

Since 2008, I have been conducting a birding class for the Lifelong Learners group of Pierpont Community and Technical College in Fairmont, West Virginia. The spring and fall classes usually consist of one classroom session and three or four field sessions at Prickett's Fort State Park during early May and early October. Other banding takes place as weather permits.

Prickett's Fort State Park is located along the Monongahela River in Marion County and has diverse habitats including a large riparian area and many wooded areas with trails and openings. The various habitats support a wide variety of species and provide many good opportunities for observing and banding birds. Nets were set above the main trail area, next to the trail parking lot, which is located west of the visitor's center. Four-to-five nets are used along an abandoned railroad bed running across a power line right of way. The banding has taken place in this same area every spring and fall since 2008.

Of this total of 69 species, 568 birds have been banded from the spring of 2008 to the fall of 2017. Forty-one percent of the bandings are made up of six species: Northern Cardinal (64), Carolina Chickadee (51), Gray Catbird (32), White-eyed Vireo (29), Baltimore Oriole (29), and Carolina Wren (28).

The following chart shows numbers and species banded

| Species | No. Banded 2017 | Banded 2008–2017 |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 0 | 2 (captured) |
| Killdeer | 0 | 1 |
| Downy Woodpecker | 0 | 4 |
| Northern Flicker | 0 | 1 |
| Acadian Flycatcher | 1 | 1 |
| Willow Flycatcher | 0 | 1 |
| Least Flycatcher | 0 | 1 |
| Eastern Phoebe | 1 | 1 |
| White-eyed Vireo | 4 | 29 |
| Warbling Vireo | 0 | 5 |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 2 | 14 |
| Blue Jay | 2 | 7 |
| Carolina Chickadee | 7 | 51 |

| Species | No. Banded 2017 | Banded 2008–2017 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Black-capped Chickadee | 0 | 1 |
| Eastern Tufted Titmouse | 1 | 9 |
| Red-breasted Nuthatch | 0 | 3 |
| House Wren | 0 | 1 |
| Carolina Wren | 4 | 28 |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | 2 | 9 |
| Ruby-crowned Kinglet | 0 | 2 |
| Golden-crowned Kinglet | 1 | 2 |
| Eastern Bluebird | 0 | 2 |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush | 0 | 1 |
| Swainson's Thrush | 0 | 4 |
| Wood Thrush | 0 | 5 |
| American Robin | 0 | 4 |
| Gray Catbird | 6 | 32 |
| Brown Thrasher | 1 | 5 |
| Northern Mockingbird | 0 | 10 |
| Cedar Waxwing | 4 | 5 |
| American Goldfinch | 10 | 19 |
| Eastern Towhee | 3 | 24 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 1 | 11 |
| Field Sparrow | 0 | 3 |
| Song Sparrow | 1 | 23 |
| Lincoln's Sparrow | 0 | 2 |
| Swamp Sparrow | 0 | 1 |
| White-throated Sparrow | 2 | 6 |
| White-crowned Sparrow | 0 | 1 |
| Dark-eyed Junco | 1 | 1 |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | 0 | 4 |
| Orchard Oriole | 5 | 13 |
| Baltimore Oriole | 13 | 29 |
| Blue-winged Warbler | 0 | 3 |
| Swainson's Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Tennessee Warbler | 8 | 8 |
| Orange-crowned Warbler | 0 | 2 |
| Nashville Warbler | 0 | 3 |
| Connecticut Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Kentucky Warbler | 0 | 2 |
| Common Yellowthroat | 2 | 11 |
| Hooded Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| American Redstart | 2 | 8 |
| Cape May Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Northern Parula | 1 | 2 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 1 | 20 |
| Bay-breasted Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Yellow Warbler | 2 | 11 |

| Species | No. Banded 2017 | Banded 2008–2017 |
|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Blackpoll Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Yellow-rumped Warbler | 1 | 24 |
| Yellow-throated Warbler | 1 | 1 |
| Prairie Warbler | 0 | 1 |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 2 | 6 |
| Wilson's Warbler | 1 | 4 |
| Scarlet Tanager | 1 | 2 |
| Northern Cardinal | 12 | 64 |
| Indigo Bunting | 2 | 13 |
| Totals | 108 | 568 |

511 Ohio Ave
Fairmont, WV

Northern Saw-whet Owl Banding Station at Valley Falls State Park, West Virginia – 2017

Joey Herron

The thirteenth year of banding Northern Saw-whet Owls (NSWO), at Valley Falls State Park, Marion and Taylor Counties, yielded the third-lowest total since banding began in 2005 with only eight owls captured.

Banding began on October 14 and ended on November 22. The eight owls captured in 2017 were 68% below the 10-year average. This is the first year a bird previously banded by another station (foreign recapture) was not caught.

The station operated on 14 nights with the nets being opened for 48-3/4 hours. Four of the nights yielded owls with peak captures of three NSWO's captured on the nights of November 8 and 10. All eight were captured between November 4th and 11th.

The station had 80 visitors from eight states. Fortunately, owls were captured on three of the nights with visitors, with a single owl captured one night after everyone had left.

Of the eight captures, two were adults and six were hatch-year birds. Females again lead the way in captures in 2017 with five, with one male and two unknowns.

After thirteen years of banding a total of 367 NSWOs have been captured, including 30 foreign recaptures and one return. The breakdown shows a heavy advantage for females, 75% to 8% for males. The unknown category completes the last 17%. The adult-to-hatch-year ratio is almost even with 52% adult to 48% hatch-year individuals. The station has hosted more than 1,400 visitors from twelve states and the District of Columbia.

Again, I would like to thank the 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.

13-Year Totals

| Females | Males | Unknown | Hatch Year | After Hatch Year | Second Year |
|---------|-------|---------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| 284 | 27 | 56 | 183 | 117 | 67 |

Banding Summary for 2017

| Date | NSWO caught |
|----------|-------------|
| 10/14/17 | 0 |
| 10/17/17 | 0 |
| 10/20/17 | 0 |
| 10/26/17 | 0 |
| 10/31/17 | 0 |
| 11/3/17 | 0 |
| 11/4/17 | 1 |
| 11/8/17 | 3 |
| 11/9/17 | 0 |
| 11/10/17 | 3 |
| 11/11/17 | 1 |
| 11/17/17 | 0 |

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------------------|
| Date | | NSWO caught |
| 11/20/17 | | 0 |
| 11/22/17 | | 0 |
| | | <u>Total 8</u> |

Age

| | | |
|------------------------|---|--------------|
| After hatch year (AHY) | 2 | |
| Second year (SY) | 0 | 25% (adults) |
| Hatch year (HY) | 6 | 75% |

Sex

| | | |
|---------|---|-------|
| Female | 5 | 62.5% |
| Male | 1 | 12.5% |
| Unknown | 2 | 25% |

511 Ohio Ave
Fairmont, WV

22nd Report of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee March 2018

Joe Hildreth

The West Virginia Bird Records Committee (WVBRC) held its annual meeting on March 3, 2018, under brilliant blue skies at Old Hemlock, Preston County. The committee was very appreciative of LeJay Graffious and his wife and their willingness to host the meeting at their home. At the meeting, the committee voted on six reports that had been submitted for the committee's consideration. Four reports were accepted and two were not accepted.

Records accepted:

A state first **Cinnamon Teal** (*Anas cyanoptera*; 2017-1) was observed on March 5, 2017 by David Patick and Michael Griffith at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam in Mason County. The bird was photographed by David Patick and John Boback.

Harris's Sparrow (*Zonotrichia querula*; 2017-3). On April 17, 2017 Jon Benedetti, Barbara and Neal Harman, Bill Butler, and Pat Collins observed a Harris's Sparrow at Middle Island, Pleasants County. The bird was photographed by Neal Harman and Jon Benedetti. This is the third accepted record after this species was placed back on the review list by the committee in 2013.

White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*; 2017-5). On April 29, 2017, Barbara Sargent observed a White-winged Dove in Alpena, Randolph County. Randy Bodkins and Matt Crowder also saw this bird. Excellent photos taken by Barbara and accompanied the record. This is the fifth accepted record for this species in the state and therefore it will be removed from the review list.

Mississippi Kite (*Ictinia mississippiensis*; 2017-6). On July 2, 2017, Mary Lynn and Larry Robinson observed an adult Mississippi Kite in their backyard near Hedgesville in Morgan County. They were able to secure many minutes of good video of this bird that proved invaluable for the acceptance of this record. This is the fourth accepted record for this species in the state.



Figure 1. Cinnamon Teal. Photo by John Boback



Figure 2. Harris's Sparrow. Photo by Neal Harman



Figure 3. White-winged Dove. Photo by Randy Bodkins



Figure 4. Mississippi Kite video. Photo still by Mary Lynn and Larry Robinson

Records not accepted:

Brewer's Blackbird (*Euphagus cyanocephalus*; 2017-2). A bird seen on December 14, 2016 was photographed and reported as a Brewer's Blackbird from Beard, Pocahontas County. The committee could not agree from the photos that this was indeed the reported species.

European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*; 2017-4). On May 13, 2017 a bird was observed and photographed at Cheat Lake, Monongalia County that was suspected of being a European Goldfinch. The photographs were not of sufficient resolution to confirm the identification and the committee did not accept the report.

Other Business:

The committee amended the by-laws to specify a method for calling meetings and setting meeting dates for the annual meeting of the committee.

The committee decided to keep Kirtland's Warbler (*Setophaga kirtlandii*) on the review list as there is only one report with sufficient documentation to be accepted by the committee. There are five historical records which are most likely valid, but there are no photographs or multiple observers for these reports. The committee feels in light of the increasing population of this species on its breeding grounds, the state should continue to solicit reports of this species in the state.

The committee decided to restrict the acceptance of reports for Eurasian Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) to only those from outside Monroe County. Monroe County has a stable, breeding population of 10–12 birds as reported by Derek Courtney and others.

The committee would like to convey that voting results of submitted reports will be announced after the committee's annual meeting. Letters to report submitters will be mailed out after the meeting and then the results will be reported in *The Redstart*.

The committee thanked Derek Courtney for his continuing efforts to publish rare bird reports and voting results on the Brooks Bird Club website. Having these materials available for review by the birders of West Virginia, and other states, has been a long-term goal of the committee.

The committee thanked Joey Herron for his service and commitment to the committee as he retires this year. Nominations were taken and secret ballots were counted to elect a member to fill this vacant seat. Ross Brittain was elected by the committee and had given the nominator his assurance that he would serve. The committee welcomes Ross and looks forward to working with him in the years to come.

Elections were held to select a new chair and vice-chair of the committee. Joe Hildreth was elected to chair the committee and Derek Courtney was elected to vice-chair. Congratulations!

Submitted by Joseph Hildreth, chair; and WVBRC members John Boback, Davette Saeler, Randy Bodkins, LeJay Graffious, Derek Courtney, Ross Brittain, David Daniels, alternate; and Wil Hershberger, secretary.

2017 Floyd Bartley Memorial Award Announced

On March 3, 2018, the 2017 Floyd Bartley Memorial Award was announced at the club's Early Spring Meeting at North Bend State Park. Gary Rankin earned the award for his articles, "Piping Plover in Gallipolis Ferry," which appeared in the April 2017 issue of *The Redstart*, Vol. 84, No. 2, pp. 40–46, and "A Melanistic Tufted Titmouse in Kanawha County", which appeared in the April 2017 issue of *The Redstart*, Vol. 84, No. 3, pp. 76–77. The award includes a cash prize of \$100.

The Floyd Bartley Memorial Award was established by an anonymous donor to honor the memory of Floyd Bartley. (See *The Redstart* 1976, Vol. 43, p. 68.) Previous winners of the Award are listed below.

| | |
|------|--|
| 1976 | Ray and Jo Ashworth |
| 1979 | Harry Slack |
| 1980 | James D. Phillips |
| 1981 | J. Lawrence Smith |
| 1982 | Eugene E. Hutton |
| 1983 | Linnie Coon |
| 1984 | Patricia Temple |
| 1985 | Melvin Hooker |
| 1987 | Jonathan Minear |
| 1988 | Julie Beatty |
| 1989 | Lorraine Rollefson |
| 1993 | Ralph K. Bell |
| 1994 | Wendell Argabrite |
| 1995 | Greg Eddy |
| 1997 | Ann Pyle |
| 1998 | John Northeimer |
| 1999 | Joey Herron |
| 2000 | Anna M. McRae |
| 2001 | Gary Felton |
| 2002 | William Beatty |
| 2003 | Matthew Orsie |
| 2004 | George E. Hall |
| 2005 | Jane J. Whitaker |
| 2006 | Matthew Orsie |
| 2008 | Rosie Campbell |
| 2009 | Jane Whitaker and Reba Hutton |
| 2010 | James Triplett and Beverly Triplett |
| 2011 | Joey Herron |
| 2012 | Scott Pendleton |
| 2013 | Douglas McClure Wood and Cynthia D. Ellis |
| 2015 | John Boback |
| 2016 | Jan Runyan |

Book Review

Ferns and Allies of the North Woods. Joe Walewski. 2016. Kollath+Stensaas Publishing, 394 Lake Ave. South, Duluth MN 55802. ISBN-10: 1-936571-08-0; ISBN-13: 978-1-936571-08-6. Paperback, \$18.95. 176 pages.

The release of Joe Walewski's *Ferns & Allies of the North Woods* by Kollath-Stensaas Publishers ushers in a new era for high quality fern field guides.

This slim, pocket-sized field guide has much to offer for such a small package. Included are general background and history sections of the ferns along with descriptions, artwork, photos and range maps for 86 species.

The guide measures 4.5 X 8.25 inches and is about 3/8-inch thick which makes it easy to tuck into a back pocket or stow in a fanny pack. The book is printed on coated paper and the pages are "stitched in" rather than "perfect bound". The latter method almost always results in pages coming loose after repeated use.

Walewski has packed a lot into such a small package and it is obvious that much thought has gone into the selection, layout, and presentation of the contents by Kollath-Stensaas Publishers and the author.

Walewski opens with a table of contents followed by the obligatory "Acknowledgements" page.

Next comes Walewski's introduction, "Welcome to the Magic", where he delves into the mystery, mythology, and hidden beauty of these seemingly "magical" plants. Walewski writes about the "Pteridomania" which swept through Europe in the 1800s and also includes a couple of quaint etchings from that period. He then discusses the various practical uses of ferns for food, scouring pads and flash powder. Such esoterica are the "fun facts" which make ferns so interesting and intriguing, especially for those being newly introduced into the wonderful world of ferns.

None of this esoterica will be new to the seasoned student of ferns but I found it fun and stimulating to read and it took me back to the day when I was a fern novice and delving into such classics as Clute's *Our Ferns in Their Haunts*.

Walewski goes on to explain the scope of the book and then the real fun begins! The reader is instantly offered a visual feast of color illustrations of the various types of ferns along with detailed yet clearly understandable text in plain English.

At this point the author takes us back in time to the Carboniferous Era when ferns ruled the earth. Once again, there is much detail here in the discussion of how coal came to be and how our use of that coal has had a global impact and a bit of playful moralizing as to what all this might mean to our planet. Next comes an easy-to-digest chart of geologic periods and a look at the creatures that came and went over the millennia and where ferns fit into all this.

And now we get to one of the most interesting aspects of ferns: reproduction. Or as Walewski titles this section, "No Birds or Bees Required". This down-to-earth and humor-infused way of writing has served the author (and thus the reader) well throughout the book by making often complex topics seem fun and non-threatening. Kollath's illustration of the fern life cycle is beautifully done (as is all of his artwork): lots of detail but no clutter. The accompanying explanatory text clearly spells out what is going on at each phase

of fern reproduction. Included in the discussion of fern reproduction are clear explanations of vegetative reproduction and hybridization.

Next Walewski takes us out of the lab and into the field with a thorough section on the various types of habitats in which ferns may be found and what one might expect to find on a seasonal basis. Here the accompanying photos of ferns through the four seasons add visual impact which helps reinforce the textual information supplied. This method of reporting and teaching is repeated throughout the book and is one of the reasons I hold this book in such high regard. No assumptions are made about the reader's knowledge or interest level and it appears every effort has been made to provide as much information as wanted or needed but in such a way as to be easily understood via text and copious well presented illustrations and photos.

At this point we have only reached page 19 of Walewski's *Ferns & Allies of the North Woods* and already there has been much information packed into a small space.

Next comes the section: "How to use this Field Guide". This section might seem superfluous but it is a great help in understanding and making the most of the somewhat unconventional, but highly effective and easy-to-use layout this book employs.

This section explains the purpose and use for the seven different entries for each species and explains how to use the five Quick Color Tabs which are there to quickly locate the group section you are interested in as well as three color tabs for habitat. Curiously, this section makes no mention of the arrows which are placed in the descriptive text and keyed to the photographs.

Now we move on to a wonderful gallery of photos which clearly show fiddleheads (crossiers) for 26 species. These excellent photos are real eye openers and will help the user understand the diversity of shape, texture and color of fiddleheads for the various species shown.

Now we get to the meat of the book: the species treatments starting with the fern allies. For the introduction to each group Walewski uses the excellent color illustrations by Kolloth to precisely point out the generalized anatomy for the group.

After a thorough treatment of each species of fern ally, Walewski showcases the moonworts in a way I have yet to see in any other fern guide. Included are no fewer than 15 species, most of which have beautiful photos showing clearly the main characteristics that are helpful in identification.

Next comes the section "Ferns of the Forest" in which Walewski has placed all the remaining species included in this book. Rather than being sorted by taxonomic group as in most guides they are sorted by three different habitat categories: "forests", "wet areas" and "rocky areas". Categorizing a field guide in this way is unconventional but does make it all the more user-friendly, and has the added bonus of encouraging the user to think: 'where does this fern grow' and 'in what kind of habitat is it growing?' This is more of Walewski's teaching method in action and it is prevalent throughout the guide. Not satisfied with just a show-and-tell book on ferns, Walewski has taken the opportunity to teach at every turn of the page of this guide. There is no doubt this method of grouping will take some acclimatization by users of more conventional fern guides. I know it will do so for me, but I like it.

Wrapping up the book is a glossary with 132 entries, a listing of other books on ferns, information on The American Fern Society, photo credits, and last, but certainly not least, a handy checklist. In keeping with the thorough and detailed nature of the rest of the book,

Walewski provides not just a list of names for the checklist but also includes synonymy for both common and scientific names. For the scientific names the author's name along with where and when that name was first published is included. This might seem like overkill for just a checklist; it provides, however, a sort of one-stop shopping for fern names.

Closing out the book is a complete alphabetical index for both common and scientific names and finally a few blank pages which can be used for field notes.

I think it is safe to say the design, layout, and artwork which Kollath+Stensaas Publishing use in their field guides set new standards for clarity, and user friendliness. As Kollath and Stensaas state on their web site "... we publish the books we'd like to have ourselves!"

All this combined with Walewski's thorough treatment of the subject and the whimsy and humor which are sprinkled throughout make *Ferns & Allies of the North Woods* a fun read. Well done.

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eBird Reports and News

September, October, and November 2017:

Nocturnal Thrushes and Confusing Warblers

Michael Slaven

September, October, and November 2017 were months filled with interesting sightings reported on eBird. One type of report that probably did not appear as often as the eBird team would like is nocturnal counts. Many of you have gone out owling, but there is another kind of birding that really comes into its own during fall migration, and that is tallying nocturnal flight calls.

One of the more challenging birds to find and identify during the birding year is the Gray-cheeked Thrush. Although this is a common migrant in West Virginia, it is an elusive bird in the daytime, usually sitting silently in its drab plumage. Its most distinguishing feature is that it basically has no striking feature. It is the thrush without an eye-ring. Many birders spend years afield and never encounter the bird, or at least never are able to positively identify it as more than a thrush species in the dark understory of the forest.

It will come as a surprise to many that the bird is actually very common in migration here, often traveling with Swainson's Thrushes and Veeries in large mixed flocks that move at night and the pre-dawn hours. If you are around appropriate habitat and find a relatively quiet spot to listen, you might hear hundreds of birds flying overhead making their distinctive contact flight calls. Some of these sound surprisingly frog-like to my ears.

It is easy to use eBird to track your nocturnal birds and add to the important scientific information being accumulated by the scientists at Cornell University who are collecting and analyzing the data you submit. The way Nocturnal Flight Counts are recorded is a little different than daytime lists, but no harder—just a little different. Since it is very difficult to track the exact number of birds flying overhead, and further since these birds frequently circle and are calling at varying intervals, the scientists record the number of calls as a better gauge of actual bird numbers when they extrapolate the data rather than depending on the guesses of the observer. This approach makes sense, because there is such variation according to local conditions, terrain, and other factors. With a little practice, a Nocturnal Flight Count is surprisingly easy to do, and will reward your efforts to track down these otherwise difficult birds. So how does the NFC protocol differ from the normal count list? Here is a breakdown of the most important points to remember when you make your list:

- Counts should normally be one hour or less, unless the number of calls are pretty low
- You should check “no” when asked if you are submitting a complete checklist (NFC checklists are still considered complete checklists by eBird when using this protocol)
- Birds that are on the ground should be labeled as “local” when appropriate
- You should usually indicate that a species was present with an “X” and not a number, in opposition to the usual eBird style

- In the comments box, place the letters NFC and give the number of calls if you can, i.e., NFC 76. If you want to make further comments, use a pipe separator “|” as in “NFC 3 | at least two different birds calling”
- If you are birding through midnight, start a new list at midnight

It sounds more complicated than it actually is. Here is a sample from my own NFC counts. Note that I neglected to label the Robin as “local”.

Date and Effort Sat Sep 26, 2015 5:31 AM **Nocturnal**

Protocol: Stationary
 Party Size: 1
 Duration: 59 minute(s)
 Observers: [Mike Slaven](#)
 Comments: Submitted from eBird for iOS, version 1.1.2 Build 27

Species 3 species total

| |
|---|
| X Gray-cheeked Thrush NFC 8 At least two birds. |
| X Swainson's Thrush NFC 76 Unknown number of birds, but more than five. |
| 1 American Robin |

Nocturnal birding can be very exciting, especially when you hear large groups of migrating birds passing overhead. There might be thrushes, peeps, warblers, and a host of other birds. Many are very challenging to identify, since they are making flight calls and may be far above you. If you take a serious liking to NFC birding, there are inexpensive apps for smartphones that will make it easy to analyze bird calls. SpectroPro and SpectrumView are two that I have used with some success. It helps to have a better recording app than generally comes standard on a smartphone. I have found the Rode company makes an excellent app for this purpose. When fall migration begins in earnest, take a break from craning your necks and struggling to identify the “Baypolls” and try nocturnal birding. You may find it to be very rewarding!

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Field Notes

Fall Season

September 1 – November 30, 2017

Casey Rucker

It was the 20th-warmest fall since records began in West Virginia, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University, although November was slightly cooler than usual. The state's 16th-driest September was followed by the state's 11th wettest October, and November was drier than usual.

These notes were gathered from the West Virginia Birds Listserv, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, from field notes submitted to the author by e-mail, at autob-ock@frontiernet.net, and by 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>. Observations were reported from 38 of West Virginia's 55 counties during the fall season.

After declining during the last two fall seasons, West Virginian avian diversity improved markedly this fall, and **Snowy Owls** made very-rare fall appearances. Review-list species included a juvenile **Laughing Gull** discovered by Mollee Brown on September 2 at the Tygart Lake boat launch in Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area, Taylor County, where the bird remained for three days and was seen by Kyle Carlsen, Steven Wilson, Derek Courtney, Terry Bronson, Joseph Hildreth, Joey Herron, and David Daniels. LeJay Graffious and Robert Dean watched a **Swainson's Hawk** fly by the Allegheny Front Migratory Observatory, Grant and Tucker Counties, on October 2. This fall also includes the first state report of the re-christened **Le Conte's Sparrow**, per last summer's revised Check-list of the American Ornithological Society, when Gary Rankin and Michael Griffith found two **Le Conte's Sparrows** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on November 26. When accepted, this observation will be fifth state record. A total of 227 species was reported in the state during the fall months.

Geese, Swans, Ducks – It was a good season for **waterfowl**, and especially for **geese**. Highlight of the **goose** season was the **Brant** spotted by Terry Bronson and David Daniels at Alpine Lake in Preston County on October 28. Hullet Good found a hybrid **Snow Goose X Ross's Goose** on Coonskin Lake, Kanawha County, from November 22 to 25. **Snow Geese** appeared in reports from Grant (FA), Jefferson (JF), Mason (MG, JK, GR), Nicholas (SWi), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. Birders saw **Ross's Geese** in Barbour County (RBo), Grant County (FA), and Mason County (GR, DP, MG). On November 19 Gary Rankin, David Patick and Michael Griffith encountered 21 **Greater White-fronted Geese** along with a likely hybrid at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County. James and Beverly Triplett spotted eleven **Greater White-fronted Geese** as well as eight **Cackling Geese** at Silver Lake Campground, Preston County, on November 29, where William Telfair found the same birds the next day. **Canada Geese** were as usual widespread throughout the state. **Mute Swans** appeared in Grant County (FA, DH) and Mason County (GR, MG, JK, DP). Two banded **Trumpeter Swans** were seen at South Mill Creek Lake, Grant County, on November 12 by Frederick Atwood and two days later by Diane Holsinger. **Tundra Swans** appeared widely, with reports from Barbour (DMi), Berkeley (PS), Grant (FA, DH), Hampshire (SC), Hardy (DH), Jefferson (EK, JN, WS, BH, LW, BT),

Monongalia (KF, TB, DCo), Nicholas (SWi), Preston (TB), Taylor (AA, TB, KCr, MSI), and Tucker (LeJ, MPo) Counties. Michael Slaven counted 233 **Tundra Swans** on Tygart Lake, Taylor County, on November 9.

West Virginia birders reported 22 species of **ducks**. There were reports in at least six counties each of **Wood Ducks**, **Blue-winged Teal**, **Gadwalls**, **American Wigeons**, **American Black Ducks**, **Mallards**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Lesser Scaup**, **Surf Scoters**, **Buffleheads**, **Hooded Mergansers**, **Common Mergansers**, and **Ruddy Ducks** this fall. Reports of the following species came from fewer than six counties, as noted: **Northern Shovelers**: Cabell (DP, MG), Fayette (JBT), Mason (GR, DP, MG), Monongalia (TB), and Nicholas (SWi) Counties; **Northern Pintails**: Hardy (DH), Nicholas (SWi), Preston (TB, DD), Summers (MAW), and Tucker (CR, HMy) Counties; **Redheads**: Mason (JBT, GR, DP, MG), Nicholas (SWi), and Taylor (TB) Counties; **Greater Scaup**: Tucker County (RBo, HMy); **White-winged Scoter**: Wayne County (MG); **Long-tailed Duck**: Tucker County (HMy, RBo, TB), **Common Goldeneyes**: Hardy (JBT), Monongalia (TB), and Pocahontas (BBu) Counties; and **Red-breasted Mergansers**: Nicholas (SWi), Preston (TB), Taylor (MSI), and Wayne (MG) Counties.

Pheasant, Grouse, and Turkeys – Richard Gregg found a **Ring-necked Pheasant** at Marmet Locks, Kanawha County, in late October and early November. Reports of **Ruffed Grouse** came only from Kanawha County (RG) and Summers County (JP). **Wild Turkeys** inspired reports only from Kanawha (HG), Mason (JBT), Monongalia (TB), Pocahontas (KK), and Summers (JP) Counties.

Grebes – **Pied-billed Grebes** appeared widely throughout the state, while birders found **Horned Grebes** in Fayette (JBT), Hardy (DH), Kanawha (RG, JP), Monongalia (TB), Nicholas (SWi), Preston (TB), Summers (JP), Taylor (TB), and Wayne (MG) Counties.

Pigeons and Doves – **Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** continue to reside throughout the state.

Cuckoos – With no notable cicada hatch during the past summer, **cuckoo** sightings were down in West Virginia compared to last year. Reports of **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** came from Kanawha (KC), Mason (TB, MG, JK), Preston (TB), Summers (JP), Tucker (CR), and Wood (JB) Counties. Terry Bronson saw a **Black-billed Cuckoo** along the Deckers Creek Trail in Preston County on September 26.

Goatsuckers and Swifts – Derek Courtney watched 350–400 **Common Nighthawks** kettling over Fairmont, Marion County, on September 13. Other reports of **Common Nighthawk** were very scanty this fall, coming only from the following counties: Greenbrier (JJP), Jefferson (JBz), Mercer (JP), Putnam (KK), and Raleigh (WS). There were eight counties with reports of **Chimney Swifts**, with the last sighting on October 5, by James Phillips in Bellepoint Park in Hinton, Summers County.

Hummingbirds – Birders in only nine counties reported sightings of **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds**, through mid-October. The last report was on October 20, when Randy Bodkins saw a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at his home in Norton, Randolph County.

Rails and Coots – On September 28, Herb Myers heard a **Sora** calling in Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Tucker County, and two days later Randy Bodkins found two **Sora** at Montrose Wetlands in Randolph County. **American Coots** appeared in birders' reports from thirteen counties.

Cranes – Terry Bronson saw two **Sandhill Cranes** flying over, appropriately enough, Cranesville Swamp in Preston County on September 27. On November 23, Gary Rankin

and David Patick found a **Sandhill Crane** in Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County.

Plovers – Steven Wilson spotted two **Black-bellied Plovers** on October 4 at Summersville Lake, Nicholas County, where the birds remained for at least three days (DP). Michael Griffith discovered four **American Golden-Plovers** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, on September 14, and at least one of the birds remained through September 22 (DP, JK, TB). An **American Golden-Plover** was also found at Ashton Ponds, Mason County, on October 1 by David Patick and Michael Griffith. **Killdeer** were well represented with reports from sixteen counties.

Sandpipers – **Sandpiper** reports were up this fall, as West Virginia birders submitted many reports of fifteen species. Reports of the following **shorebirds** came from the counties listed: **Stilt**: Mason (MG, JK); **Sanderling**: Greenbrier (JJP) and Nicholas (SWi); **Dunlin**: Hardy (DH), Mason (MG, JK, DP, JBT, GR), Nicholas (SWi), Pocahontas (SK), and Taylor (MSI); **Baird's Sandpiper**: Mason (MG); **Least Sandpipers**: Cabell (MG) and Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP); **White-rumped Sandpiper**: Mason (DP, GR, MG); **Pectoral Sandpipers**: Barbour (TB), Cabell (MG), Greenbrier (JJP), Mason (MG, JK, DP, LC), Preston (TB), and Tucker (HMy); **Semipalmated Sandpiper**: Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP); **Western Sandpiper**: Mason (MG); **American Woodcock**: Tucker (CR); **Wilson's Snipe**: Cabell (MG), Mason (MG, JK, DP), Monongalia (TB), and Preston (TB, DD); **Spotted Sandpipers**: Kanawha (RG), Mason (MG, JK, DP), Monongalia (TB), Summers (JP), and Tucker (CR); **Solitary Sandpipers**: Barbour (RBo), Cabell (MG), Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP, TB), Mercer (JJP), Preston (TB), Summers (JP), and Taylor (RBo, TB); **Lesser Yellowlegs**: Cabell (MG), Greenbrier (JJP), Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP), and Preston (TB); and **Greater Yellowlegs**: Greenbrier (JJP), Marion (JoH, TB), Mason (MG, JK, DP, GR), Summers (JP), and Tucker (AG).

Gulls and Terns – The **Laughing Gull** that appeared at Pleasant Creek WMA, Taylor County, in the beginning of September, is discussed near the beginning of these notes. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were sighted in Braxton (SWi), Jefferson (BT), Monongalia (TB), Nicholas (SWi), Summers (JP), Taylor (RBo), and Tucker (HMy, RBo) Counties; reports of **Ring-billed Gulls** came from Kanawha (RG), Monongalia (TB), Nicholas (SWi), Randolph (RBo), and Wayne (GR, DP) Counties; and **Herring Gulls** were reported in Kanawha (RG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP, JBT), Putnam (CE), and Summers (JJP) Counties. Michael Griffith and Janet Keating saw three **Caspian Terns** at both Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, where four **Caspian Terns** were seen the next day (GR, MG, JK, DP), and at Beech Fork Dam, Wayne County, on September 1. On September 2, Randy Bodkins saw a **Black Tern** at Tygart Lake State Park, Taylor County. On the next day Steven Wilson found a **Black Tern** at Summersville Lake, Nicholas County, where he also spotted a **Common Tern** on November 7. James Phillips encountered 3 **Common Terns** at the mouth of the Bluestone River on September 14, and 14 **Common Terns** at Bluestone Lake on November 9; both sightings in Summers County. **Forster's Terns** were seen by Steven Wilson at Summersville Lake, Nicholas County, on October 24, and by Richard Gregg at Marmet Locks, Kanawha County, on November 11.

Loons – Sightings of **Common Loons** were up this fall as well, with reports from ten counties.

Cormorants – Reports of **Double-crested Cormorants** came from seventeen counties.

Hérons and Egrets – **Great Blue Herons** appeared throughout much of West Virginia this fall. **Great Egrets** and **Green Herons** were reported in six counties each. Michael

Griffith and Janet Keating spotted a juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on October 21. On October 31, Terry Bronson found a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Upper Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area, Barbour County.

Ibises: On October 17, at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, Michael Griffith and Janet Keating saw a juvenile Pelagic **Ibis**, likely a **Glossy Ibis** but not identifiable to species.

Vultures – Reports of **Black Vultures** came from seven counties, while only nine counties had reports of **Turkey Vultures**.

Hawks and Eagles – It was another good fall for raptor reports. The **Swainson's Hawk** seen by LeJay Graffious and Robert Dean in Dolly Sods on October 2 is discussed near the beginning of these notes. **Osprey, Bald Eagles, Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawks, Broad-winged Hawks, and Red-tailed Hawks** were all well-represented in reports throughout the state during the fall season. Hanging Rock Raptor Observatory watchers in Monroe County recorded 216 **Bald Eagles** and 63 **Golden Eagles**, as well as 4,329 **Broad-winged Hawks**. Donny Good saw two **Osprey** and two **Bald Eagles** soaring over Bowden, Randolph County, on September 9. Wilma Jarrell saw approximately 130 **Broad-winged Hawks** migrating past her home in Wileyville, Wetzel County, on September 12, her highest one-day total for the year. On October 7, Randy Bodkins was at home in Norton, Randolph County, when he witnessed a **Northern Goshawk** making off with a neighbor's chicken. Rodney Bartgis watched a juvenile **Golden Eagle** soaring above the Sinks of Gandy, Randolph County, on October 4.

Owls – **Snowy Owls** began an invasion that was to continue through much of the winter, when Joseph Hildreth discovered a **Snowy Owl** in Morgantown, Monongalia County, on November 16, where the bird was reported again four days later. Another **Snowy Owl** was sighted in Huttonsville, Randolph County, on November 30 by Shawn Bland, as reported by Steven Wilson. Birders in only two counties reported either **Eastern Screech-Owls**: Tucker (CR, MK) and Wetzel (WJ), or **Great Horned Owls**: Pocahontas (KK) and Wayne (GR); and observers reported **Barred Owls** in seven counties: Berkeley (WH), Harrison (RBr), Kanawha (DG), Randolph (DG), Summers (JP), Tucker (CR), and Wetzel (WJ). The author of these notes listened to a **Long-eared Owl** calling on a quiet October 11 evening outside his house in Dry Fork, Tucker County, during the same week as an appearance the year before. Ross Brittain banded his first **Northern Saw-whet Owl** of the year in Watters Smith Memorial State Park, Harrison County, on October 20.

Kingfishers – There were reports of **Belted Kingfisher** in twelve counties.

Woodpeckers – **Red-headed Woodpeckers** inspired reports in eight counties: Hardy (SWi), Kanawha (HG), Mercer (JP), Monongalia (TB), Monroe (JP), Summers (JJP), Wayne (KC), and Wood (JB). **Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Downy Woodpeckers, Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, and Pileated Woodpeckers** were all widely reported.

Falcons – It was an average fall for **falcons** in West Virginia. **American Kestrels** continued to appear widely throughout the state. **Merlins** made appearances only in Hardy County (DH), Monongalia County (TB, MSI), Monroe County (JP), Nicholas County (SWi), Pendleton County (MWi), and Tucker County (CR). There were reports of **Peregrine Falcons** from eight counties: Jefferson (JF), Mason (MG, JK, GR), Monroe (JP),



Olive-sided Flycatcher. Photo by Barry Williams

Nicholas (SWi), Ohio (PM), Pocahontas (SK), Putnam (KK, CE), and Tucker (RBo).

Flycatchers – Olive-sided Flycatcher

reports were up this fall, coming from Greenbrier (BWi), Hampshire (SC), Jefferson (DHa), and Preston (TB) Counties. **Eastern Wood-Pewees** were reported from Jefferson (JBz, DHa), Kanawha (KC, HG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP), Summers (JP), Wayne (MG), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (JB) Counties, with the latest reports coming on October 1 from Jon Benedetti, who saw several **Eastern Wood-Pewees** in a wave of migrants passing through McDonough Wildlife Refuge in Wood County, and from Hullet Good, who hosted an **Eastern Wood-Pewee** on his farm in Milliken, Kanawha County. On September 2, Gary Rankin, Michael Griffith, Janet Keating, and David Patick spotted a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** along Long Ridge Road in Mason County, and Randy Bodkins discovered two **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers**, one of

them singing, on Cheat Mountain, Randolph County, on September 23. September 16 was the day to find other *Empidonax* flycatchers, as David Patick, Michael Griffith, and Janet Keating saw an **Acadian Flycatcher** at Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area, Cabell County, and Jon Benedetti saw and heard both an **Acadian Flycatcher** and a **Least Flycatcher** at McDonough Wildlife Refuge, Wood County. **Eastern Phoebes** were reported widely in the state. On September 1, Hullet Good saw a **Great Crested Flycatcher** in his trees in Milliken, Kanawha County. Terry Bronson spotted two **Great Crested Flycatchers** in West Virginia University's Core Arboretum, Monongalia County, on September 6.

Vireos – White-eyed Vireos were reported only from Berkeley (PS), Mason (TB), Preston (TB), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (JB) Counties. **Yellow-throated, Blue-headed, and Red-eyed Vireos** appeared in counties throughout the state during September and early October, with **Blue-headed Vireos** continuing through October 25 (TB). Reporting birders observed **Philadelphia Vireos** in Barbour (TB), Berkeley (PS), Mason (DP, JK, MG), Monongalia (TB), Preston (TB), and Wood (JB) Counties, and **Warbling Vireos** were reported in Jefferson (JBz), Lewis (TB), and Marion (TB) Counties.

Crows, Jays, and Ravens – Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens prompted many reports throughout West Virginia. **Fish Crows** inspired reports only from Jefferson County (JBz, DHa) during the fall.

Larks – Horned Larks appeared this fall only in reports from Grant (FA), Jefferson (AIB), and Mason (DP, JK, MG, GR) Counties.

Swallows – Reports of **swallows** were scanty this season. **Tree Swallows** lingered in six counties as late as November 1, when Michael Griffith and Janet Keating saw two **Tree Swallows** at Green Bottom WMA, Cabell County. On September 9, Joette Borzik saw six **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** at the Claymont Mansion, Jefferson County. **Barn Swallows** appeared during September in only Mason (MG, JK) and Mercer (JP) counties.

Chickadees and Titmice – Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees did not inspire

many reports this fall from their resident territories. **Tufted Titmice** were widely reported throughout the state as usual.

Nuthatches – Last year's irruption of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** did not repeat itself this year, as the only individuals reported were in Watoga State Park, Pocahontas County, as observed by Kim Kazmierski on September 26, and in Blackwater Falls State Park, Tucker County, as reported by Deborah Hale on October 14. **White-breasted Nuthatches** occupied their usual spots in reports from throughout the state.

Creepers – Reports of **Brown Creeper** came from only seven counties, beginning on October 14 in Jefferson County (DHa) and continuing through the end of November.

Wrens – **House Wrens** were only reported in Cabell (DP, JK, MG), Kanawha (HG), Mason (DP, MG), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties, and the latest sighting was on October 1. **Winter Wrens** were relatively widespread this fall, inspiring reports from eight counties. On October 5, Mark Johnson found two **Marsh Wrens** in Moorefield, Hardy County, and another **Marsh Wren** visited Ashton Wetlands, Mason County, from October 29 to November 4, as observed by David Patick, Michael Griffith, and Janet Keating. **Carolina Wrens** appeared in good numbers in reports from throughout of the state.

Gnatcatchers – Birders in Berkeley (PS), Kanawha (HG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP), Mercer (JP), and Summers (JP) Counties reported **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers**, all during the first half of September.

Kinglets – **Golden-crowned** and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** inspired reports throughout the state this fall.

Thrushes – It was an average fall for **thrushes** in West Virginia. **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Swainson's Thrushes**, and **American Robins** were all seen widely in reporting counties. Reports of **Veery** came from Berkeley (MO), Monongalia (TB), Summers (JP), and Tucker (CR) Counties. **Gray-cheeked Thrushes** appeared in Berkeley (PS), Cabell/Wayne (MG, JK), Mason (MG, JK), and Tucker (CR) Counties, **Hermit Thrushes** occasioned reports in Barbour (TB), Jefferson (DHa, CD), Kanawha (RG), Monongalia (TB), Summers (JP), Tucker (CR), and Wood (JB) Counties, and **Wood Thrushes** were reported only from Berkeley (MO), Cabell/Wayne (MG, JK), Kanawha (HG), Mason (MG, JK), Monongalia (TB), Summers (JP), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush** was both a life bird and a new yard bird for Paul Saffold when it appeared in Inwood, Berkeley County, on September 21.

Mockingbirds and **Thrashers** – Reports of **Gray Catbirds**, **Brown Thrashers**, and **Northern Mockingbirds** were relatively sparse throughout the state this fall. Terry Bronson reported the latest **Gray Catbird**, at Coopers Rock State Park, Monongalia County, on October 24, as well as the latest **Brown Thrasher**, in central Monongalia County on October 2.

Starlings – Despite reports from only eight counties, **European Starlings** no doubt continued to occupy widespread habitats throughout West Virginia.

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwings** prompted reports from sixteen counties throughout the state.

Weaver Finches – The **House Sparrow** prompted reports from only three counties this fall. In spite of this lack of attention, the species no doubt continues throughout the state, primarily in urban and agricultural settings.

Pipits – Diane Holsinger found at least 150 **American Pipits** near Mathias, Hardy County, on November 5. The only other **American Pipit** reports this fall were from Mason County (GR, DP, MG).

Finches and Allies – House Finches and **American Goldfinches** inspired relatively few reports in West Virginia this fall, and **Purple Finches** were only seen in Preston (TB), Randolph (HMy), Tucker (CR), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. John Boback located eighteen **Red Crossbills** at Cranberry Glades Nature Center, Pocahontas County, on September 10, and Aaron Graham witnessed a **Red Crossbill** flyover at Fred Long Centennial Park, Tucker County, on November 5. Reports of **Pine Siskins** were up a bit compared to last year, coming from Kanawha (RG), Preston (TB), Putnam (KC), Randolph (HMy), Summers (JJP), Tucker (AG, CR), and Wayne (GR) Counties.

Longspurs and Buntings – Frederick Atwood spotted a **Lapland Longspur** on Hogueland Lane, Grant County, on November 12, and five days later Steven Wilson relocated the bird. Allan Bryan observed three **Lapland Longspurs** along Meyerstown Road in Jefferson County on November 18. Terry Bronson spotted a **Snow Bunting** at Cheat Lake, Monongalia County, during a fallout on November 8.

Towhees, Sparrows, and Juncos – Although **Nelson’s Sparrow** appeared for the sixth year in a row, this time at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, where David Patick and Michael Griffith found one on October 1, West Virginia’s **emberizid** of the fall season was the **Le Conte’s Sparrow** they found in the same location on November 26, as discussed near the beginning of these notes. The most-frequent **emberizid** species in reports this fall were **Eastern Towhee** and **Chipping, Field, Song, Lincoln’s, Swamp,** and **White-throated Sparrows**, as well as **Dark-eyed Juncos**. The following were reported only in the counties listed: **American Tree** in Mason County (GR, DP, MG); **Clay-colored** in Tucker County (CR); **Vesper** in Kanawha (RG), Mason (DP, MG), and Tucker (AG) Counties; **Savannah** in Jefferson (DHa), Kanawha (RG), Mason (MG, JK, DP), Monongalia (TB), Tucker (CR), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties; **Grasshopper** in Monongalia County (TB); **Fox** in Cabell (MG), Randolph (HMy), Summers (JP), Tucker (CR), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties; and **White-crowned** in Harrison (TB), Jefferson (WS), Mason (MG, JK), Putnam (CE), and Tucker (CR) Counties.

Blackbirds – On November 26, Gary Rankin and Michael Griffith saw a **Yellow-headed Blackbird** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. Deborah Hale saw half a dozen **Bobolinks** as well as a chattering **Baltimore Oriole** on September 12



LeConte’s Sparrow. Photo by Rennie Talbert

in Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County, and on September 29 in Michael Griffith and Janet Keating found four **Bobolinks** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. **Red-winged Blackbirds** were reported in seven counties, while West Virginia birders in only four counties each reported sightings of **Eastern Meadowlarks**, **Rusty Blackbirds**, and **Common Grackles**. On September 20, Deborah Hale made the only **Brown-headed Cowbird** report of the season, once again in Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County. Terry Bronson spotted two **Baltimore Orioles** in the Core Arboretum, Monongalia County, on September 6.

Warblers – This fall birders in West Virginia found 32 **warbler** species, and it was another good season for reports. **Warbler** species reported in six or fewer counties are listed below with the counties and contributors. Species listed without contributors were reported in at least seven counties. **Warblers** reported this fall included **Ovenbird** – Cabell (DP, MG), Monongalia (TB), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (JB) Counties; **Worm-eating** – Berkeley (PS), Kanawha (HG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP), and Monongalia (TB) Counties; **Northern Waterthrush** – Marion County (TB); **Golden-winged** – Barbour County (TB); **Blue-winged** – Monongalia County (TB); **Black-and-white**; **Prothonotary** – Kanawha County (HG); **Tennessee**; **Orange-crowned** – Berkeley (PS), Preston (TB), and Randolph (RBo) Counties; **Nashville**; **Connecticut** – Monongalia (DCo, TB) and Preston (TB) Counties; **Mourning** – Jefferson (CD) and Tucker (CR) Counties; **Common Yellowthroat**; **Hooded**; **American Redstart**; **Cape May**; **Northern Parula**: Berkeley (PS), Jefferson (DH), Marion (TB), Mason (GR, MG, JK), Summers (JP), and Tucker (CR) Counties; **Magnolia**; **Bay-breasted**; **Blackburnian**; **Yellow** – Berkeley (PS), Kanawha (HG), and Marion (TB) Counties; **Chestnut-sided**; **Blackpoll**; **Black-throated Blue** – Berkeley (PS), Monongalia (TB), Preston (TB), and Tucker (CR) Counties; **Palm**; **Pine** – Kanawha (HG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, DP), Tucker (CR), and Wayne (MG) Counties; **Yellow-rumped**; **Yellow-throated**; **Prairie** – Barbour (TB), Berkeley (PS), Kanawha (RG, HG), Mason (GR, MG, JK, TB), Monongalia (TB), and Summers (JJP) Counties; **Black-throated Green**; **Canada** – Mercer (JP) and Wayne (MG, JK) Counties; and **Wilson's** – Berkeley (PS), Kanawha (RG), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. A **Mourning Warbler** was a new yard bird for Carol Del-Colle, who spotted it in thickets behind her pond in Summit Point, Jefferson County, on September 20.

Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Buntings – **Summer Tanagers** only appeared in reports from Mason (DP, JK, MG), Summers (JP), and Wood (JB) Counties. **Scarlet Tanagers, Northern Cardinals, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings** prompted reports from birders in most parts of the state. Bruni Haydl hosted juvenile **Northern Cardinals** still begging from their parents on the late date of October 7 in her yard in Charles Town, Jefferson County. Terry Bronson found a **Blue Grosbeak** at Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area, Monongalia County, on September 19, and the author of these notes was surprised by a singing **Blue Grosbeak** at Canaan Valley State Park, Tucker County, on September 24.

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Index for Volume 84

- Accipiter, 34
A.O.S. taxonomic changes for 2017, 74
Argabrite, Wendell, L., 1941-2016, 90
Banding at Prickett's Fort State Park, Marion County,
West Virginia, spring and fall 2016, 92
Bartley, Floyd, Memorial Award, 2016, announced, 95
Bittern, American, 34, 102
Least, 34
Blackbird, Brewer's, 71, 79
Red-winged, 6, 12, 37, 43, 44, 48, 49, 66, 87, 106
Rusty, 48, 66, 87, 106
Bluebird, Eastern, 5, 11, 36, 44, 47, 49, 50, 64, 86, 93, 105
Boback, John, 71
Bobolink, 6, 12, 37, 66, 106
Bobwhite, Northern, 3, 101
Bodkins, Randy, 72
Book reviews, 49, 77, 96
Buckelew, Albert R., Jr., 8, 31, 96
Bufflehead, 32, 45, 60, 83, 100
Bunting, Indigo, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 37, 66, 92, 94, 107
Painted, 71, 73
Snow, 87
Canvasback, 5, 44, 60, 83, 84, 101
Cardinal, Northern, 6, 12, 13, 14, 37, 44, 48, 49, 50, 66, 88,
92, 94, 107
Catbird, Gray, 5, 11, 36, 44, 47, 49, 64, 86, 92, 94, 107
Chase, Katherine, 76
Chat, Yellow-breasted, 6, 37, 93, 106
Chickadee, Black-capped, 4, 8, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 93, 104
Carolina, 36, 47, 64, 86, 92, 104
sp., 49, 50
Christmas Bird Count, The, West Virginia, 43
Chuck-will's-widow, 33, 101
Coot, American, 45, 61, 84, 101
Collared-Dove, Eurasian, 33, 101
Cormorant, Double-crested, 34, 43, 45, 62, 84, 102
Courtney, Derek, 54
Cowbird, Brown-headed, 7, 12, 37, 44, 48, 66, 87, 106
Crane, Sandhill, 33, 43, 45, 49, 84
Creeper, Brown, 8, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 105, 106
Crossbill, Red, 36, 44, 48, 49, 65, 87, 105
Crow, American, 4, 11, 13, 14, 36, 47, 49, 50, 63, 85,
86, 104
Fish, 36, 47, 49, 64, 86, 104
Cuckoo, Black-billed, 2, 10, 33, 61, 101
Yellow-billed, 2, 10, 33, 61, 101
Dickcissel, 37, 107
Diener, Natalie, 17, 28
Richard L., 22
Dove, Collared - See Collared-Dove.
Mourning, 2, 10, 13, 33, 43, 45, 49, 50, 61, 84, 101
White-winged, 71, 73, 101
Dowitcher, Long-billed, 84, 102
Duck, American Black, 60, 83, 100
Long-tailed, 49, 80, 83, 101
Ring-necked, 44, 60, 83, 100
Ruddy, 32, 45, 60, 83, 84, 100
Whistling, See Whistling-Duck
Wood, 2, 32, 44, 60, 83, 100
Dunlin, 61, 102
Eagle, Bald, 3, 7, 34, 46, 62, 85, 102
Golden, 43, 46, 62, 85, 103
eBird reports and news, 57, 79, 97
Egret, Cattle, 60, 62, 102
Great, 34, 62, 84, 102
Falcon, Peregrine, 35, 44, 46, 63, 85, 103
Field Notes, Fall Season, 60
Spring Season, 100
Summer Season, 32
Winter Season, 83
Finch, House, 5, 11, 36, 43, 48, 65, 86, 105
Purple, 5, 11, 36, 44, 48, 65, 86, 105
Flicker, Northern, 3, 10, 35, 44, 46, 63, 85, 92
Flycatcher, Acadian, 4, 10, 13, 14, 35, 63, 103
Alder, 4, 35, 103
Great Crested, 4, 10, 35, 63, 103
Least, 4, 10, 35, 92, 103
Olive-sided, 35, 63, 103
Willow, 4, 35, 92, 103
Yellow-bellied, 35, 103
Foray, 2016, Tucker County, West Virginia, 2
Bird list, 2
Breeding bird surveys, 10
Ferns and fern allies, 56
Flowering plants, 22
Fungi, 21
Lepidoptera, 16
Mammals, 19
Participants, 30
Reptiles and amphibians, 18
Singing male census, 8
Weather, 29
Fox, Thomas R., 56
Gadwall, 43, 44, 60, 83, 100
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray, 4, 11, 36, 64, 93, 105
Golden-Plover, American, 60, 61
Goldeneye, Common, 45, 83, 101
Goldfinch, American, 5, 11, 36, 48, 49, 50, 65, 85, 93, 105
Goose, Cackling, 44, 83
Canada, 2, 10, 32, 43, 44, 49, 60, 83, 100
Greater White-fronted, 60, 83, 100
Ross's, 44, 49, 83
Snow, 44, 60, 83, 100
Blue phase, 100
Goshawk, Northern, 35, 103
Grackle, Common, 7, 12, 37, 44, 48, 66, 87, 106
Grebe, Horned, 45, 61, 84, 101
Pied-billed, 32, 45, 61, 84, 101
Red-necked, 43, 45, 49, 79, 80, 84
Grosbeak, Blue, 37, 66, 107
Evening, 86, 106
Rose-breasted, 6, 8, 12, 37, 66, 107
Grouse, Ruffed, 2, 32, 43, 45, 61, 84, 101
Gull, Bonaparte's, 62, 84, 102
Herring, 34, 45, 62, 84, 102
Ring-billed, 34, 45, 62, 80, 84, 102
Harrier, Northern, 34, 46, 62, 85, 103
Hawk, Broad-winged, 3, 35, 62, 103
Cooper's, 3, 34, 43, 46, 62, 85, 103
Red-shouldered, 3, 35, 46, 50, 62, 85, 103
Red-tailed, 3, 35, 46, 50, 62, 85, 103
Rough-legged, 46, 85, 103
Sharp-shinned, 3, 34, 46, 62, 85, 103
Heron, Great Blue, 3, 10, 34, 46, 62, 84, 102
Green, 3, 34, 62, 102
Little Blue, 34, 62
Night, See Night-Heron.
Herron, Joey, 52, 92

Hershberger, Wil, 77
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated, 3, 10, 33, 61, 92, 101
 Rufous, 57, 60, 61
 Hyer, Gail, 73
 Ibis, Glossy, 34
 sp, 43, 46, 49, 72, 83
 Index for volume 83, 67
 Jay, Blue, 4, 8, 11, 36, 44, 47, 49, 50, 63, 85, 92, 104
 Jennings, Cheryl, 16
 Jolley, Doug, 87
 Junco, Dark-eyed, 6, 8, 9, 12, 37, 48, 49, 50, 66, 87, 106
 Kestrel, American, 3, 10, 35, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Killdeer, 3, 10, 33, 45, 54, 61, 84, 92, 102
 Kingbird, Eastern, 4, 10, 35, 63, 103
 Kingfisher, Belted, 3, 10, 35, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned, 5, 11, 36, 47, 50, 64, 86, 93, 105
 Ruby-crowned, 47, 64, 86, 93, 106
 Kite, Mississippi, 72
 Lark, Horned, 44, 47, 64, 86, 104
 Longspur, Lapland, 60, 87
 Loon, Common, 34, 45, 62, 84, 102
 Red-throated, 79, 80
 Mallard, 2, 10, 43, 44, 49, 50, 60, 83, 84, 100
 Martin, Purple, 4, 36, 104
 McCullough, Carol, 10
 Frederick, 10
 Meadowlark, Eastern, 7, 12, 37, 48, 66, 87, 106
 Merganser, Common, 2, 32, 43, 45, 60, 83, 84, 100
 Hooded, 43, 45, 60, 83, 100
 Red-breasted, 45, 61, 84, 100
 Merlin, 2, 4, 35, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Metheny, Larry, 19
 Orion, 19
 Mockingbird, Northern, 5, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 93, 105
 Night-Heron, Black-crowned, 34, 102
 Nighthawk, Common, 2, 33, 61, 101
 Nuthatch, Red-breasted, 4, 8, 36, 44, 47, 64, 86, 92, 93, 105
 White-breasted, 4, 36, 47, 49, 50, 64, 86, 105
 Oriole, Baltimore, 7, 12, 37, 66, 87, 93, 106
 Orchard, 7, 12, 37, 66, 93, 106
 Osprey, 34, 62, 102
 Ovenbird, 5, 8, 9, 11, 37, 65, 106, 107
 Owl, Barn, 35, 46, 49, 85
 Barred, 3, 35, 43, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Great Horned, 2, 3, 35, 43, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Long-eared, 63, 103
 Northern Saw-whet, 2, 3, 35, 46, 52, 85, 103
 Valley Falls State Park, banding station –
 2016, 52
 Screech, See Screech-Owl.
 Short-eared, 85
 Snowy, 80
 Parula, Northern, 6, 11, 37, 65, 93, 106
 Patick, David, 104
 Pelican, American White, 34
 Perrone, Ron, 73
 Phalarope, Red-necked, 61
 Pheasant, Ring-necked, 45, 49
 Phoebe, Eastern, 4, 10, 35, 44, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Pigeon, Rock, 2, 33, 45, 49, 61, 84, 101
 Pintail, Northern, 44, 83, 101
 Pipit, American, 65, 86, 105
 Plover, American Golden, See Golden-Plover.
 Piping, 32, 33, 54, 55, 71
 Semipalmated, 33, 61, 102
 Rail, King, 71
 Virginia, 61, 84, 101
 Rankin, Gary O., 54, 76, 90, 91
 Raven, Common, 4, 11, 36, 47, 63, 85, 104
 Redhead, 44, 60, 83, 84, 101
 Redpoll, Common, 80
 Redstart, American, 5, 11, 37, 65, 93, 106
 Robin, American, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 36, 47, 49, 64, 86, 92,
 93, 105
 Rucker, Casey, 32, 60, 74, 83, 100
 Runyon, Janice, 95
 Sanderling, 33, 61
 Sandpiper, Baird's, 57, 62
 Least, 33, 54, 62, 102
 Pectoral, 62, 102
 Semipalmated, 33, 62, 102
 Solitary, 62, 102
 Spotted, 3, 43, 45, 49, 62, 84, 102
 Stilt, 33
 White-rumped, 102
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied, 3, 8, 10, 35, 44, 46, 63, 85, 103
 Scaup, Greater, 45, 49, 60, 83, 101
 Lesser, 32, 45, 60, 83, 100
 Scoter, Black, 60, 101
 Sp, 79
 Surf, 45, 49, 60, 83, 101
 Screech-Owl, Eastern, 3, 10, 35, 43, 46, 52, 62, 85, 103
 Shoveler, Northern, 32, 44, 60, 83, 84, 100
 Shrike, Loggerhead, 35, 47, 63, 85, 103
 Siskin, Pine, 2, 36, 44, 48, 65, 87, 106
 Snipe, Wilson's, 33, 45, 62, 84, 102
 Slaven, Michael, 57, 79, 97
 Sora, 61, 101
 Sparrow, American Tree, 44, 48, 87, 106
 Chipping, 6, 13, 37, 48, 65, 87, 93, 106
 Clay-colored, 2, 37, 106
 Field, 6, 37, 48, 65, 87, 93, 106
 Fox, 48, 66, 87, 106
 Grasshopper, 6, 37, 106
 Harris's, 106
 Henslow's, 6, 37
 House, 5, 11, 36, 48, 49, 86, 105
 Lark, 79, 87
 Lincoln's, 65, 92, 93, 106
 Nelson's, 65
 Savannah, 6, 12, 37, 48, 66, 87, 106
 Song, 6, 12, 13, 14, 37, 48, 49, 50, 65, 87, 93, 106
 Swamp, 6, 12, 37, 44, 48, 65, 87, 93, 106
 Vesper, 2, 66, 106
 White-crowned, 48, 65, 87, 93, 106
 White-throated, 48, 49, 65, 87, 93, 106
 Starling, European, 11, 13, 36, 47, 49, 64, 65, 86, 105
 Swallow, Bank, 4, 36, 104
 Barn, 4, 11, 36, 64, 104
 Cliff, 4, 36, 64, 104
 Northern Rough-winged, 4, 36, 64, 104
 Tree, 11, 36, 64, 86, 104
 Swan, Mute, 44, 83, 100
 Tundra, 44, 60, 83, 100
 Swift, Chimney, 2, 33, 61, 101
 Tanager, Scarlet, 6, 8, 12, 13, 37, 66, 94, 107
 Summer, 37, 66, 107
 Teal, Blue-winged, 32, 44, 60, 83, 98, 99, 100
 Cinnamon, 100, 104
 Green-winged, 44, 60, 83, 100
 Tern, Black, 34, 62
 Caspian, 34

- Common, 34
- Forster's, 34, 62, 102
- Thrasher, Brown, 5, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 93, 105
- Thrush, Gray-cheeked, 64, 92, 93, 105
 - Hermit, 5, 8, 9, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 105
 - Swainson's, 36, 64, 93, 105
 - Wood, 5, 11, 13, 14, 36, 64, 93, 105
- Titmouse, Tufted, 4, 11, 13, 14, 36, 47, 49, 50, 64, 76, 86, 93, 104
 - A melanistic, in Kanawha County, 76
- Tomazin, Ryan, 2, 7, 21, 29, 59
- Towhee, Eastern, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 37, 44, 48, 65, 87, 93, 106
- Turkey, Wild, 2, 10, 32, 43, 45, 61, 84, 101
- Turnstone, Ruddy, 71
- Veery, 5, 8, 9, 11, 36, 105
- Vireo, Blue-headed, 4, 8, 9, 11, 35, 63, 98, 103
- Philadelphia, 63, 104
 - Red-eyed, 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 35, 63, 92, 103
 - Warbling, 4, 35, 63, 92
 - White-eyed, 4, 11, 35, 63, 92, 103
 - Yellow-throated, 4, 11, 35, 63, 103
- Vulture, Black, 3, 34, 43, 46, 62, 84, 102
 - Turkey, 3, 10, 34, 43, 46, 62, 84, 85, 102
- Warbler, Bay-breasted, 65, 93, 107
 - Black-and-white, 5, 11, 37, 65, 106
 - Black-throated Blue, 6, 8, 9, 12, 37, 65, 94, 106
 - Black-throated Green, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 37, 65, 94, 107
 - Blackburnian, 6, 11, 37, 65, 107
 - Blackpoll, 65, 93, 107
 - Blue-winged, 5, 37, 65, 93, 106
 - Canada, 6, 8, 9, 12, 37, 65, 107
 - Cape May, 65, 92, 93, 106
 - Cerulean, 5, 11, 37, 65, 106, 107
 - Chestnut-sided, 6, 12, 37, 65, 93, 107
 - Connecticut, 57, 65, 93
 - Golden-winged, 5, 37, 65, 106
 - Hooded, 5, 11, 37, 65, 92, 93, 106
 - Kentucky, 5, 11, 37, 65, 93, 106, 107
 - Kirtland's, 71
 - Magnolia, 6, 8, 9, 11, 37, 65, 92, 93, 107
 - Mourning, 5, 11, 37, 106
 - Myrtle (See Yellow-rumped)
 - Nashville, 65, 93, 106
 - Orange-crowned, 65, 93
 - Palm, 65, 87, 107
 - Pine, 6, 12, 37, 65, 88, 98, 107
 - Prairie, 2, 37, 65, 94, 107
 - Prothonotary, 37, 106
 - Swainson's, 93, 106
 - Tennessee, 37, 65, 106, 107
 - Wilson's, 65, 94, 107
 - Worm-eating, 5, 11, 37, 106
 - Yellow, 6, 12, 37, 65, 93, 107
 - Yellow-rumped, 6, 37, 48, 65, 88, 94, 107
 - Yellow-throated, 6, 12, 37, 65, 98, 107
- Waterthrush, Louisiana, 5, 11, 37, 106
 - Northern, 5, 37, 65, 106
- Waxwing, Cedar, 5, 8, 11, 36, 47, 65, 86, 93, 105
- West, Jayson, 18
- West Virginia Bird Records Committee, 21st report, March 2017, 71
- Whip-poor-will, Eastern, 2, 10, 33, 101
- Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied, 71
- Whitaker, Jane, 43
- Wigeon, American, 44, 60, 83, 100
 - Eurasian, 72
- Willet, 62
- Wood-Pewee, Eastern, 4, 10, 35, 63, 103
- Woodcock, American, 2, 33, 62, 84, 102
- Woodpecker, Downy, 3, 10, 35, 44, 46, 50, 63, 85, 92
 - Hairy, 3, 8, 10, 35, 46, 63, 85
 - Pileated, 3, 8, 10, 35, 44, 46, 50, 63, 85
 - Red-bellied, 3, 10, 35, 43, 46, 63, 85
 - Red-headed, 3, 35, 43, 46, 63, 85, 103
- Wren, Carolina, 4, 11, 36, 47, 49, 50, 64, 86, 92, 93, 105
 - House, 4, 11, 36, 64, 93, 105
 - Marsh, 64, 105
 - Sedge, 60
 - Winter, 4, 8, 11, 36, 47, 64, 86, 105
- Yellowlegs, Greater, 33, 43, 45, 49, 62, 84, 102
 - Lesser, 33, 62, 102
- Yellowthroat, Common, 5, 11, 37, 48, 49, 65, 87, 93, 106

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| Date | Activity | Place |
|---------------------|---|--|
| January | BBC Membership Month | Wheeling, WV |
| February | Write an article for the Mail Bag or The Redstart | mail to editors |
| Jan. 31-Feb. 2 | Trip to Killdeer Plains (Contact Dick Esker) | |
| March 1-2 | Funk/Killbuck Marsh (overnight trip — contact Dick Esker) | |
| March 9-11 | Early Spring Meeting (Contact Dick Esker) | North Bend State Park Harrisville, WV |
| March 18 | Waterfowl Field Trip (day trip) (Contact Carl Slater) | Seneca Lake, OH |
| April 21 | Three Rivers Bird Club (day trip) | Raccoon Creek State Park, PA (Contact Ryan Tomazin) |
| May 10-13 | Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls State Park | Davis, WV |
| May 12 | International Migratory Bird Day/ N. American Migration Count | local chapters |
| June 3-10 | Foray – Camp Pocahontas | Thornwood, WV (contact Janice Emrick or Ryan Tomazin) |
| August-October | Bird Banding | Dolly Sods, WV |
| October | BBC Fall Reunion & Meeting, Date and time TBD Check Mail Bag and website | |
| November 7-11 | Eastern Shore (Contact Carl Slater) | |
| Dec. 14-Jan. 5, '18 | Christmas Bird Counts | local chapters |

BBC FORAYS (dates and places tentative)

2018 Thornwood 4-H Camp, Pocahontas County Thornwood, WV

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Winter: March 15 Spring: June 15 Summer: September 15 Fall: December 15
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The dates for the 2018 BBC program may be changed if necessary. Changes will be announced on the web page or in The Mail Bag.

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