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The REDSTART

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THE ORNITHOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF WEST VIRGINIA

2025 - The Brooks Bird Club, Inc.

Founded September 1932
Named in honor of A. B. Brooks, Naturalist

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American Ornithological Society Taxonomic Changes for 2025, and a New Global Checklist

Casey Rucker

The Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) published the sixty-sixth supplement to the AOS Check-list on August 14, and made the article publicly available immediately (Chesser et al. 2025). Additionally, a new global bird list was introduced this year and is described below.

AOS Check-list Changes

As has recently been the case, no species was added to or deleted from the West Virginia bird list. There are numerous changes, however, relating to birds seen in our state.

- The order of Columbiformes has changed, and is now:
  White-winged Dove, *Zenaida asiatica*
  Mourning Dove, *Zenaida macroura*
  Eurasian Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*
  Rock Pigeon, *Columba livia*.
- Aramidae, limpkins, and Gruidae, cranes, have been moved to precede Rallidae, rails.
- Herring Gull has been split; our North American species is now American Herring Gull, *Larus smithsonianus*. It is possible that in the future a vagrant Vega Gull, retaining the former scientific name *Larus argentatus*, will occur in West Virginia.
  Sterninae, terns, have been moved to precede Larinae, gulls.
- Threskiornithidae, Spoonbills and Ibises, have been moved to precede Pelicanidae, pelicans.
- Two our our Accipiters have been moved to a new genus, *Astur*, and are now placed after Sharp-shinned Hawk, *Accipiter striatus*:
  Cooper's Hawk *Astur cooperii*
  American Goshawk *Astur atricapillus*
  Northern Harrier, *Circus hudsonius*, is now placed after *Astur* in the list.
- Warbling Vireo has been split into Eastern Warbling Vireo, which retains the scientific name *Vireo gilvus*, and Western Warbling Vireo, *Vireo swainsoni*.

Wil Hershberger, Secretary of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee, maintains our state list, which is available online at links located at the bottom of the page on https://www.brooksbirdclub.org/west-virginia-bird-records-committee.html.

AviList

Until this year, there has been no single source for global bird taxonomy. The Clements Checklist, the Howard and Moore Complete Checklist, IOC World Bird List,

and HBW/BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist have all been published separately, complicating both research and conservation efforts. For example, in 2020 only 68% of raptor species were congruent among all four lists. In 2018 at the International Ornithological Congress in Vancouver, the Working Group Avian Checklists was formed, including taxonomists involved with the IOC World Bird List, eBird/Clements, the North and South American Classification Committees of the American Ornithological Society, and Avibase, later joined by BirdLife International. On June 11, 2025, AviList version 2025 was launched on www.avilist.org. The eBird/Clements Checklist, the IOC World Bird List, and BirdLife International will all align with AviList taxonomy, although the process will take several years for BirdLife International. AviList will be updated annually, and Regional Advisory Groups will serve as intermediaries between researchers around the world and AviList's Taxonomic Committee.

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Field Notes
Winter Season
December 1, 2024 – February 28, 2025

Casey Rucker

It was a roller coaster of a winter, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. After a December that was close to average temperatures, January was the twelfth-coldest on record, followed by a slightly warmer-than-normal February. Although December and January were a shade drier than normal, it was the sixth-wettest February, ushering out drought conditions in most of the state.

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

Ariella Malfaro and Aaron Graham discovered a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at South Mill Creek Lake, Grant County, on December 17. It was the second state record as well as the second record within ten years. A **Harlequin Duck** attracted many birders to Gauley Bridge, Fayette County, for the second winter in a row; it was seen by Mindy and Allen Waldron on February 18. Bird diversity slightly increased compared to the previous winter, with 130 species reported from 29 of West Virginia's 55 counties.

Geese, **Swans**, and **Ducks –** Sightings of **geese** were once again relatively sparse in West Virginia this winter. **Ross's Geese** inspired reports from Monongalia **(CBC),** Pendleton (CBC), and Wood (TB) Counties. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was found on January 4 in the Greenbrier CBC, and a **Cackling Goose** appeared in the Parkersburg CBC on December 28. Reports of **Canada Geese** were as usual widespread throughout the state. The Morgantown CBC recorded both **Mute** and **Tundra Swans** on December 14.

Waterfowl numbers were up a bit this winter. A **Harlequin Duck** observed by many in Fayette County during February is described near the beginning of these notes. The following species made appearances in at least ten West Virginia counties: **Gadwalls**, **Mallards**, **American Black Ducks**, **Green-winged Teal**, and **Hooded** and **Common mergansers**, while birders in six to nine counties found **Wood Ducks**, **American Wigeons**, **Northern Pintails**, **Redheads**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, and **Buffleheads**. The following birds inspired reports from the counties listed: **Northern Shovelers** in Jefferson (CBC), Kanawha (CBC), and Monongalia (CBC); **Canvasbacks** in Mason **(**CBC), Raleigh (MAW), and Wetzel (WJ); **Lesser Scaup** in Mercer **(**CBC), Monongalia **(**CBC), Raleigh (CBC), Summers (CBC), and Wetzel (WJ); **Surf** and **White-winged scoters** in Wood **(**TB); **Long-tailed Duck** in Summers (JP); **Common Goldeneyes** in Taylor (CBC) and Wetzel (WJ); **Red-breasted Mergansers** in Taylor (CBC) and Wood (CBC); and **Ruddy Ducks** in Kanawha (CBC), Mason (CBC), Monongalia (CBC), Raleigh (CBC), and Wetzel (WJ).

Turkeys and **Grouse** – **Wild Turkey** sightings were widespread, including many on the tallies of Christmas Bird Counts. **Ruffed Grouse** reports came from Christmas Bird Counts in Hampshire, Mercer, Pendleton, and Pocahontas Counties.

Grebes – **Pied-billed Grebes** were reported widely throughout the state.

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

Rails and **Coots** –**Virginia Rails** appeared in two Christmas Bird Counts: Hardy County on December 19. and Charles Town, Jefferson County, on December 17. **American Coots** inspired reports in Kanawha (HG), Mason (CBC), Monongalia (CBC), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties this winter.

Plovers – Reports of **Killdeer** were up this winter, with records from twelve counties.

Sandpipers – **American Woodcock** were observed during February in Logan (DG) and Summers (JJP) Counties. **Wilson's Snipe** were reported from Greenbrier (CBC), Hardy (CBC), Mercer (CBC), Monongalia (CBC), and Pendleton (CBC) Counties.

Gulls – It was a sparse season for winter **gulls** in West Virginia once again. **Bonaparte's Gulls** appeared in Summers (CBC) and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. Birders reported **Ring-billed Gulls** in five West Virginia counties. **American Herring Gulls** appeared in reports from Mason (CBC), Ohio (CBC), Summers (JP), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Loons – Reports of **Common Loons** came from Monongalia (CBC) and Summers (JP) Counties.

Cormorants – There were reports of **Double-crested Cormorants** from only Mason (GR, MG), Monongalia (CBC), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties this winter.

Herons – A **Green Heron** was a rare seasonal find for the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count in Monongalia County on December 14, and a **Great Egret** appeared in the Parkersburg Christmas Bird Count in Wood County on December 28. **Great Blue Herons** appeared throughout the state this winter.

Vultures – Reports of **Black** and **Turkey vultures** came from fourteen and eighteen counties, respectively.

Eagles and **Hawks** – Hulett Good spotted an Osprey in Kanawha County on January 15. **Golden Eagles** inspired reports from Hampshire (CBC), Mercer (JP), Monroe (JP), Pendleton (CBC), and Tucker (CBC) Counties. **Northern Harriers**, **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's hawks**, **Bald Eagles**, and **Red-shouldered** and **Red-tailed hawks** appeared widely throughout West Virginia during the winter season**.** On December 5 in Forest Hill, Summers County, James and Judy Phillips discovered an **American Goshawk** perched in a tree. The 20th Winter Eagle Survey on January 18 found at least 55 **Bald Eagles** in Greenbrier, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, and Summers Counties, as reported by James Phillips.

Owls – **American Barn Owls** were reported only in the Pocahontas County Christmas Bird Count on December 14. Reports of **Eastern Screech-Owls** and of **Great Horned Owls** came from nine and ten counties respectively. Birders in thirteen counties reported **Barred Owls**. **Short-eared Owls** appeared in Mason County (MG, JK), Monongalia County (MG, JK, CBC), and Tucker County (RBo, MK). The **Northern Saw-whet Owl** found during the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count, Monongalia County, on December 14, was the only one reported this season.

Kingfishers – West Virginia birders in twenty counties reported **Belted Kingfishers**.

Woodpeckers – **Red-headed Woodpeckers**, **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, **Downy** and **Hairy woodpeckers**, **Northern Flickers**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were all subjects of widespread reports in West Virginia over the winter.

Falcons – **American Kestrels, Merlins**, and **Peregrine Falcons** were well-represented in Christmas Bird Counts.

Flycatchers – Reports of **Eastern Phoebe** came from seventeen counties this winter.

Vireos – For the eighth year in a row the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count recorded a **White-eyed Vireo**, on December 14 in Monongalia County.

Jays, **Crows**, and **Ravens** – **Blue Jays**, **American Crows**, and **Common Ravens** appeared in their usual haunts throughout the state.

Chickadees and **Titmice** – **Carolina** and **Black-capped chickadee**s appeared in reports from their overlapping territories throughout West Virginia. **Tufted Titmice** occupied their usual spots in reports from throughout the state.

Larks – Reports of **Horned Larks** came only from Christmas Bird Counts in Berkeley and Jefferson Counties.

Kinglets – **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned kinglets** were both familiar sights in most parts of the state this winter.

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwing** sightings were up this winter, coming from 13 counties.

Nuthatches – In spite of being an irruption year, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** inspired reports in only seven counties. **White-breasted Nuthatches** were as usual widely reported throughout the state.

Creepers – Birders in sixteen West Virginia counties reported **Brown Creepers**.

Wrens – West Virginia birders reported **Winter** and **Carolina wrens** in good numbers statewide. Two **Marsh Wrens** appeared in the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count in Monongalia County on December 14.

Catbirds, **Thrashers**, and **Mockingbirds** – In Christmas Bird Counts, **Gray Catbirds** were reported in Pendleton and Pocahontas Counties, and **Brown Thrashers** were reported in Hampshire, Mason, McDowell, and Monongalia Counties. West Virginians reported **Northern Mockingbirds** widely in lower elevations over the winter season.

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

Thrushes – **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Hermit Thrushes**, and **American Robins** appeared in good numbers in our state this winter, mostly at lower elevations.

Old World Sparrows – Thanks to Christmas Bird Counts, we have been assured that the **House Sparrow** continues throughout the state, primarily in urban and farm settings.

Pipits – Reports of **American Pipits** came from Berkeley (CBC), Hampshire (CBC), Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (CBC), Mason (CBC), Monongalia (CBC), and Summers (JP) Counties.

Finches and **Allies** – **House** and **Purple finches** and **American Goldfinches** appeared widely in West Virginia this winter. **Pine Siskins** were seen in only Monongalia (CBC) and Summers (JP) Counties.

Sparrows, **Juncos**, and **Towhees** – On December 14 and 17, **Lincoln's Sparrows** appeared in Christmas Bird Counts in Monongalia and Jefferson Counties, respectively. The Wheeling Christmas Bird Count found a **Vesper Sparrow** in Ohio County on December 27. **Chipping**, **Field**, **Fox**, **American Tree**, **White-crowned**, **White-throated**,

Song, and **Swamp sparrows**, as well as **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Eastern Towhees**, appeared widely. **Savannah Sparrows** were observed in Christmas Bird Counts in Berkeley, Greenbrier, Hardy, Jefferson, Mason, and Monongalia Counties.

Blackbirds and **Allies** – Reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, **Rusty Blackbirds**, and **Common Grackles** came from most reporting areas in the state. On December 1, Michael Griffith and Janet Keating discovered a **Brewer's Blackbird** among a flock of **European Starlings** along Rt. 817 in Mason County.

Warblers – The **Black-throated Gray Warbler** found in Grant County in December by Ariella Malfaro and Aaron Graham is described near the beginning of these notes. The Oak Hill Christmas Bird Count discovered an **Ovenbird** and an **American Redstart** on December 14. A **Palm Warbler** was found in the Pendleton County Christmas Bird Count on December 18. Birders in lower elevations saw Myrtle-race **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at locations throughout the state.

Cardinals – Birders throughout the state reported **Northern Cardinals** in good numbers.

Contributors to the Winter Field Notes: Randy Bodkins (RBo), Terry Bronson (TB), Donny Good (DG), Hullet Good (HG), Michael Griffith (MG), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), Janet Keating (JK), Mimi Kibler (MK), James Phillips (JP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), and Mindy and Allen Waldron (MAW).

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Original papers in the field of natural history are published in *The Redstart.* Papers are judged on the basis of their contributions to original data, ideas, or interpretations. Scientific accuracy and clarity are most important, and to this end, an advisory board, selected by the editorial staff, will review submitted papers as needed. Papers should be submitted in Word, by e-mail if possible, to autoblock@frontiernet.net or on a CD and sent to the editor; otherwise, papers should be typewritten, double-spaced on one side of the paper only, and sent to the editor at P.O. Box 2, Seneca Rocks, WV 26884.

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The Brooks Bird Club, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose objective is to encourage the study and conservation of birds and other phases of natural history. Membership includes subscriptions to *The Redstart* and *Mail Bag* and entitles one to all the privileges offered by the Club. Classes of membership are Student, $20; Individual, $35; Family, $40; Sustaining, $60; Life, $550; Family Life, $700. Checks should be written payable to The Brooks Bird Club and mailed to P.O. Box 4077, Wheeling, WV 26003.

2025 Calendar of Events
The Brooks Bird Club, Inc.

Date	Activity	Place
January	BBC Membership Month	
February	Write article for The Mail Bag and The Redstart	
Feb. 20-21	Funk/Killbuck Marsh Field Trip (Contact: Dick Esker)	
March 7-9	Early Spring Meeting (Contact: Dick Esker).....	North Bend State Park
May 8-11	Wildflower Pilgrimage	Blackwater Falls State Park
May 10	International Migratory Bird Day (local chapters)	
June 15-20	Foray – Camp Pinnacle ..... (Contact: Cindy Slater or Mary Murin)	Wardensville, WV
July 3-6	Bonus Birding Weekend, Blackwater Falls SP (Contact: Cindy Slater)	
Aug.-Oct.	Bird Banding	Dolly Sods
Oct. 10-12	BBC Annual Fall Meeting..... (Contact: Cindy Slater)	Tygart Lake State Park
Nov. TBD	Eastern Shore (Contact: Cindy Slater)	
Dec. 14-Jan. 5	Christmas Bird Counts.....	Statewide

BBC FORAYS

2025 Camp Pinnacle, Hardy County

SEASONAL FIELD NOTES DUE

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

ARTICLES FOR THE MAIL BAG DUE

February 15 May 15 August 15 November 15
MAIL TO: Ryan Tomazin, 12025 County Road 11, Apt. 212, Burnsville, MN 55337,
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The dates for the 2025 BBC programs may be changed if necessary. Changes will be announced on the web page or in The Mail Bag.

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