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Heizer Creek Bird Counts: Forty Years of Observations

J. Lawrence Smith

On May 30, 1963, Julian Tinsley and I conducted a census of birds along 10 miles of Heizer Creek Road near Poca, Putnam County. Our method was simply driving along counting birds seen and heard from the road. The value of such a count would be the relative numbers and comparison of abundance of those species found. A number of changes in the bird life of the area are revealed by census results carried out over nearly 40 years. Additional counts were made using the same method in 1985, 1990, 1996, and 1999. Tinsley accompanied me only in 1963, and James Triplett joined me in 1996, and I did the others by myself.

The topography, forest cover, and land use along Heizer Creek is typical of areas of Putnam and neighboring counties away from the wide floodplain of the Kanawha River. Valleys of tributary streams of the Kanawha are narrow and twisting with elevations of 1,000 feet or slightly above on the highest hilltops. Family dwellings and small farms are interspersed along the creek and lower slopes, while ridge crests are forested. Forest cover is essentially of the Central Hardwoods, oak-hickory type, although Eastern Hemlock occupies a very small area.

The result of the 1963 count was 44 species with 225 individuals during a period of less than two hours at mid morning. The most numerous species was the Indigo Bunting with 26 counted, while the Song Sparrow was second at 24. Other birds among the 10 most numerous species were the Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Cardinal, Wood Thrush, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Yellow Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Eastern Wood-Pewee. The range in number of individuals among these eight species was from 7 Eastern Wood-Pewees to 13 Acadian Flycatchers.

After more than two decades, a census was taken on June 3, 1985, with 48 species numbering 201 individuals counted. The Indigo Bunting remained the most numerous species with 17 tallied, while the Song Sparrow dropped to third after the Yellow Warbler. The 15 Yellow Warblers counted was almost twice the number in 1963. Significant increases in numbers of the White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Blue-winged Warbler since 1963 seemed evidence of a greater amount of land reverting to brushy conditions.

Two counts reveal probable heavy mortality among Carolina Wrens as a result of severe winter weather conditions. Seventeen wrens were counted on May 31, 1990, while none were found in 1985, and only two were counted in 1963. Early 1985 was marked by heavy snowfall and record subzero temperatures in the Kanawha Valley, while conditions in early 1963 were equally adverse. Winter weather prior to 1990 was rather mild with little snowfall and the lack of extreme low temperatures. These conditions allowed wren numbers to remain high later that year.

A definite increase occurred in the number of Yellow-throated Warblers between 1985 and 1990. On the earlier of the two counts, only three were found with all heard singing upslope, often where pines were present. Nine were counted in 1990 with nearly all present in hardwoods on lower slopes or along the creek. Interesting has been the presence of Yellow-throated Warblers in sycamores along streams, as they have continued to increase in numbers and are no longer largely restricted to pines as was the case decades ago.

Light rain may have encouraged rather than hindered activity and song on May 27, 1996, with the total of 420 birds well above the 1990 tally of 334 and about double that of 1963 and 1985. The most numerous species was the American Robin with 30 counted, which is far above previous dates. Chimney Swifts were moving lower in numbers as the fifth most numerous species, with 19 counted.

Results of Five Counts

The number of species counted on all five counts was 72, an average of 53 species per count. Total birds counted was 1,458 with an average of 292 birds per count. The 10 most numerous species were Song Sparrow, 110; Indigo Bunting, 99; Yellow Warbler, 75; Northern Cardinal, 69; American Robin, 64; Red-eyed Vireo, 52; American Redstart, 50; Wood Thrush, 46; Common Yellowthroat, 42; and Mourning Dove, 41.

The complete list for all five counts with the total for each species and the average count for species with a count of 5 or more in parentheses, follows: Turkey Vulture, 1; Red-shouldered Hawk, 3; Broad-winged Hawk, 1; Red-tailed Hawk, 6 (1.2); Killdeer, 1; Mourning Dove, 41 (8.2); Yellow-billed Cuckoo, 4; Chimney Swift, 30 (6); Ruby-throated Hummingbird, 2; Belted Kingfisher, 5 (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 9 (1.8); Northern Flicker 10 (2); Pileated Woodpecker, 6 (1.2); Eastern Wood-Pewee, 23 (4.6); Acadian Flycatcher, 38 (7.6); Willow Flycatcher, 1; Eastern Phoebe, 24 (4.8); Great Crested Flycatcher, 2; Eastern Kingbird, 3; Northern Rough-winged Swallow, 4; Barn Swallow, 12 (2.4); Blue Jay, 10 (2); American Crow, 26 (5.2); Carolina Chickadee, 14 (2.8); Tufted Titmouse, 32 (6.4); White-breasted Nuthatch, 6 (1.2); Carolina Wren, 45 (9); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, 8 (1.6); Eastern Bluebird, 7 (1.4); Wood Thrush, 46 (9.2); American Robin, 64 (12.8); Gray Catbird, 33 (6.6); Northern Mockingbird, 9 (1.8); Brown Thrasher, 2; European Starling, 39 (7.8); White-eyed Vireo, 27 (5.4); Yellow-throated Vireo, 8 (1.6); Warbling Vireo, 2; Red-eyed Vireo, 52 (10.4); Blue-winged Warbler, 15 (3); Northern Parula, 1; Yellow Warbler, 75 (15); Yellow-throated Warbler, 26 (5.2); Prairie Warbler, 11 (2.2); Cerulean Warbler, 16 (3.2); Worm-eating Warbler, 5 (1); Black-and-White Warbler, 3; American Redstart, 50 (10); Ovenbird, 7 (1.4); Louisiana Waterthrush, 8 (1.6); Kentucky Warbler, 29 (5.8); Common Yellowthroat, 42 (8.4); Hooded Warbler, 4; Yellow-breasted Chat, 30 (6); Summer Tanager, 6 (1.2); Scarlet Tanager, 13 (2.6); Northern

Cardinal, 69 (13.8); Indigo Bunting, 99 (19.8); Eastern Towhee, 24 (4.8); Chipping Sparrow, 31 (6.2); Field Sparrow, 14 (2.8); Song Sparrow, 110 (22); Red-winged Blackbird, 22 (4.4); Common Grackle, 10 (2); Brown-headed Cowbird, 18 (3.6); Orchard Oriole, 16 (3.2); Baltimore Oriole, 3; House Finch, 5 (1); American Goldfinch, 35 (7); House Sparrow, 2.

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Three Rivers Migration Observatory: Fall Migration 2008

Ronald A. Canterbury

This report documents the 14th year of bird-banding at the Three Rivers Migration Observatory (TRMO). The weather was typical for fall weather at this station, and the first cold front appeared in mid-September. Dry conditions persisted throughout much of the Fall 2008 season. Banding was conducted on 109 days from July 9–November 22, 2008. Captured were 2,460 birds, including 100 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that were released unbanded. The number of types of birds handled was 84 species. Table 1 list the species and number of individuals per species captured during the autumn 2008 season, and Figure 1 shows the number of birds captured per day. The Tennessee Warbler ($n = 432$) was the most numerous species captured.

In July, 165 birds were captured during 18 days of netting. During August and September, 422 birds were captured during 28 days of banding and 969 birds during 30 days of banding, respectively. However, it was an extremely poor avian flight in October, where only 617 birds were captured in 23 days of banding. In November, 287 birds were captured during 10 days of banding. The sparrow flight in October and November was extremely poor.

The peak banding date this season was September 10, 2008, during which 91 birds were captured. Eighty or more birds were handled on four days during the Fall 2008 banding. The biggest wave came from September 9–11 where 251 birds were captured during these three days of banding. There were some extremely early arrivals, including a Tennessee Warbler on August 1, a Savannah Sparrow on July 20, and a Black-capped Chickadee on Aug. 9. In general, it was an unusual fall banding pattern at this station. For example, Cedar Waxwings were captured throughout the fall with a peak of 77 birds on October 30, and some warblers and thrushes were banded in record number since inception of the station in 1995. In contrast, some common local species such as the Tufted Titmouse were low in numbers and the sparrow flight was virtually absent in the area this fall. Black-and-white Warblers seemed to be highly abundant in July and August with almost a daily capture of at least one bird, and most Black-throated Green Warblers moved exceptionally early.

During the Fall 2008 season, the species captured in record number for TRMO included the Yellow-throated Vireo ($n = 19$), Red-eyed Vireo ($n = 85$), Veery ($n = 8$), Gray-cheeked Thrush ($n = 34$), Cedar Waxwing ($n = 201$), Blue-winged Warbler ($n = 13$), Black-throated Green Warbler ($n = 49$), Blackburnian Warbler ($n = 24$), Bay-breasted Warbler ($n = 72$), Cerulean Warbler ($n = 4$), Black-and-white Warbler ($n = 53$), Hooded Warbler ($n = 70$), and Scarlet Tanager ($n = 51$).

Allen Waldron, Scott Perry, and Andrew Canterbury assisted with data collection. Financial support was provided by Southern West Virginia Bird Research Center.

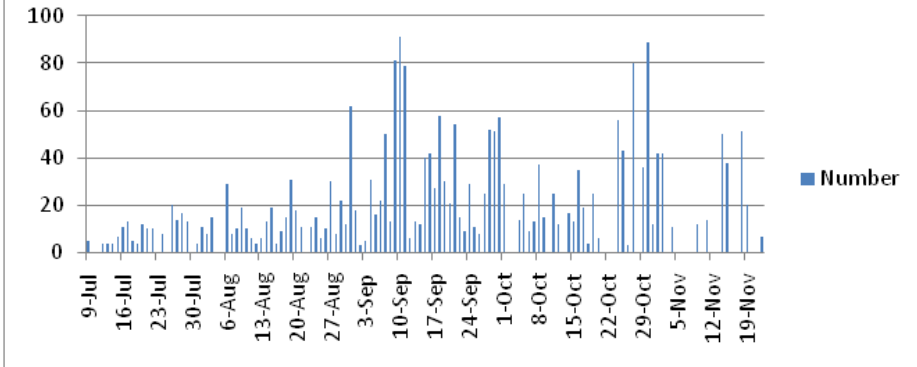
Table 1
Species List for the Autumn 2008 Season

Species	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	3	Aug. 1	Sep. 5		
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	Oct. 18			
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	100	July 12	Sep. 24	9	Aug. 19
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	4	Oct. 5	Nov. 1		
Downy Woodpecker	6	July 17	Oct. 6		
Hairy Woodpecker	1	July 17			
Eastern Wood-Pewee	13	Aug. 6	Oct. 20		
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	2	Aug. 19	Aug. 30		
Acadian Flycatcher	2	Aug. 22	Oct. 4		
“Traill’s Flycatcher	7	Aug. 15	Sep. 6		
Least Flycatcher	4	Aug. 14	Sep. 23		
Eastern Phoebe	24	July 14	Oct. 27		
White-eyed Vireo	9	July 27	Sep. 29		
Yellow-throated Vireo	19	July 17	Sep. 27	3	Sep. 12
Blue-headed Vireo	25	July 26	Oct. 27	6	Oct. 27
Philadelphia Vireo	1	Sep. 10			
Red-eyed Vireo	85	July 15	Sep. 29	12	Aug. 6
Blue Jay	11	Sep. 30	Oct. 25	3	Oct. 16
Black-capped Chickadee	1	Aug. 9			
Carolina Chickadee	21	July 9	Nov. 22	3	Oct. 24
Tufted Titmouse	32	July 29	Nov. 22	5	Sep. 29
White-breasted Nuthatch	9	Oct. 24	Nov. 19	4	Nov. 19
Brown Creeper	3	Oct. 29	Nov. 11		
Carolina Wren	17	July 12	Oct. 27		
House Wren	13	July 16	Oct. 16		
Winter Wren	4	Oct. 16	Oct. 25		
Golden-crowned Kinglet	18	Oct. 11	Nov. 9	5	Oct. 31
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	31	Sep. 22	Nov. 4	5	Oct. 19
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	16	July 15	Sep. 6		
Eastern Bluebird	4	Nov. 22			
Veery	8	Sep. 3	Oct. 16		
Gray-cheeked Thrush	34	Sep. 11	Oct. 19	4	Sep. 29

Species	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
Swainson's Thrush	82	Sep. 3	Oct. 20	8	Sep. 30
Hermit Thrush	10	Oct. 12	Nov. 19	4	Oct. 27
Wood Thrush	15	Sep. 4	Oct. 16		
American Robin	7	July 13	Nov. 4		
Gray Catbird	64	July 24	Oct. 19	4	Sep. 22
Cedar Waxwing	201	July 9	Nov. 1	77	Oct. 30
Blue-winged Warbler	13	July 26	Sep. 16		
Tennessee Warbler	432	Aug. 1	Oct. 25	44	Sep. 10
Orange-crowned Warbler	5	Oct. 7	Oct. 14		
Nashville Warbler	14	Aug. 17	Oct. 12	4	Sep. 11
Northern Parula	8	July 13	Sep. 5		
Chestnut-sided Warbler	37	Aug. 15	Sep. 28	6	Sep. 10
Magnolia Warbler	82	Aug. 31	Oct. 27	8	Sep. 30
Cape May Warbler	7	Sep. 16	Sep. 28		
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	29	Sep. 6	Oct. 11	8	Sep. 11
Yellow-rumped Warbler	12	Oct. 5	Nov. 18	5	Nov. 14
Black-throated Green Warbler	49	July 20	Oct. 1	7	Sep. 10
Blackburnian Warbler	24	Sep. 5	Sep. 21	5	Sep. 9
Yellow-throated Warbler	4	Aug. 1	Sep. 9		
Palm Warbler	29	Sep. 16	Oct. 17	4	Oct. 15
Bay-breasted Warbler	72	Sep. 7	Oct. 9	8	Sep. 29
Blackpoll Warbler	20	Sep. 21	Oct. 25	4	Sep. 29
Cerulean Warbler	4	July 20	Aug. 14		
Black-and-white Warbler	53	July 16	Sep. 22	3	Aug. 14
American Redstart	46	July 17	Sep. 29	6	Sep. 4
Worm-eating Warbler	13	Aug. 1	Sep. 27		
Ovenbird	54	July 16	Oct. 12	7	Sep. 10
Northern Waterthrush	1	Sep. 29			
Kentucky Warbler	2	Aug. 11	Aug. 31		
Connecticut Warbler	1	Sep. 9			
Common Yellowthroat	40	Aug. 31	Oct. 17	4	Sep. 29
Hooded Warbler	70	July 15	Oct. 14	4	Sep. 14
Canada Warbler	1	Sep. 5			
Scarlet Tanager	51	July 15	Oct. 11	3	Sep. 28
Eastern Towhee	14	July 20	Oct. 29		
Chipping Sparrow	20	July 9	Oct. 27		
Field Sparrow	12	July 9	Nov. 14		
Savannah Sparrow	1	July 20			
Song Sparrow	21	Aug. 9	Nov. 9	7	Oct. 24

Species	Number	First	Last	Peak No.	Date
Lincoln's Sparrow	9	Oct. 5	Oct. 27		
Swamp Sparrow	15	Oct. 4	Oct. 27	3	Oct. 16
White-throated Sparrow	68	Oct. 11	Nov. 9	14	Oct. 25
Dark-eyed Junco	32	Oct. 24	Nov. 19	6	Oct. 25
Northern Cardinal	17	July 26	Nov. 18	3	Nov. 2
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	3	Sep. 21	Oct. 16		
Blue Grosbeak	1	July 14			
Indigo Bunting	39	July 14	Oct. 15	7	Aug. 20
Baltimore Oriole	1	Aug. 10			
Purple Finch	10	Nov. 2	Nov. 18		
House Finch	28	Nov. 11	Nov. 18		
Pine Siskin	9	Oct. 30	Nov. 18	7	Nov. 18
American Goldfinch	80	July 13	Nov. 19	29	Oct. 24

Figure 1. Number of Birds Captured per Day in Autumn 2008 at TRMO



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Thirteenth Report of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee: August 2009

The West Virginia Bird Records Committee (WVBRC) held its annual meeting at North Bend State Park on March 7, 2009. This was in conjunction with the Brooks Bird Club's Mid-Winter Meeting. At the meeting, action was taken on 12 records.

Records Accepted:

Trumpeter Swan (*Cynus buccinator*) (2008-1). This is the third accepted record for the state. The swan was seen February 2, 2008, near Lewisburg, Greenbrier County. James Triplett, Beverly Triplet, and Barry Williams submitted the report. This was a "clean" bird, which showed no signs of banding. The Trumpeter Swan populations in Ontario, Canada, and most of the Great Lakes states have grown substantially in the last 10–15 years and are considered, now, to be self-sustaining.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) (2008-2). This is the second accepted record for the state. Gary Felton saw the gull on April 27, 2008, in Reedsville, Preston County.

A third record (2009-9) of Lesser Black-backed Gull in the state was accepted. This was a first-winter plumage bird seen on February 5, 2009, in the company of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls at the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. Gary Rankin submitted the report for February 5, and Michael Griffith and David Patick also observed the gull.

Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*) (2008-3). This is the fifth accepted record for the state, and the Red Phalarope will be removed from the West Virginia Review List. Simon Collier submitted a report of a pair of Red Phalaropes on September 29, 2008. Many people with previous experience with the species observed the birds on the Ohio River in late September, 2008, at Riverfront Park, Huntington, Cabell County. William Liar photographed the birds.

Cackling Goose (*Branta hutchinsii*) (2009-1). Kimberly Kazmierski, who submitted the report, and many other observers with previous experience saw three Cackling Geese on January 3, 2009, at Ridenour Lake, Nitro, Kanawha County. This is the third accepted record for the state.

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) (2009-2). This is the fifth accepted record for the state, and the species will be removed from the Review List. This adult was seen on January 14, 2009, at Willow Island Locks and Dam, Pleasants County. Jon Benedetti submitted the report and photographed the birds. Jon Tharp Jr. and John Tharp III also observed the birds. A colder-than-average winter forced many gulls from the Great Lakes region to look for open water. This gull was one of many rarities that graced West Virginia in the winter of 2008–2009.

Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*) (2009-3 and 2009-7). This is the third accepted record for the state. This first-winter plumage gull was seen for a few days

in late January 2009, at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. Michael Griffith submitted the report for January 29, 2009, and Matthew Orsie, who photographed the bird, submitted the report for January 30, 2009. Other observers included Wendell Argabrite and David Patick.

Also, a fourth record ((2009-8) of Glaucous Gull was accepted for the state. Wendell Argabrite submitted the report of a first-winter plumage bird seen on February 5, 2009, at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. Michael Griffith and Gary Rankin also saw the bird, which had noticeably different plumage characteristics than the Glaucous Gull seen the week before. The second bird was much whiter and had less mottling in the plumage.

Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucoides kumlieni*) (2009-4 and 2009-6). This is the first accepted record for the state. This juvenile gull was seen in the company of some Herring Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls at close range on an ice flow on January 29, 2009, at the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County. Wendell Argabrite submitted the report. Other observers were Michael Griffith and David Patick.

Other Business:

After 10 dedicated years of service as secretary of the WVBC, James Fregonara stepped down. The BRC wishes to thank Jim for his service and friendship. Wendell Argabrite graciously volunteered to replace Jim as secretary, and the committee unanimously voted to accept his offer.

Wendell Argabrite's term expired. Robert Tallman, a West Virginia Division of Natural Resources ornithologist, was elected to replace Wendell. Matthew Orsie was elected to a full term and will continue to serve as chair of the committee. Jon Benedetti will continue as vice-chair.

Wendell Argabrite was elected as a nonvoting Honorary Life Member of the WVBC. His decades of contributions to West Virginia ornithology and his dedicated service to the BRC are greatly appreciated and acknowledged with this election. George A. Hall was the only other life member elected by the Committee (WVBC 2002).

Submitted by the Committee: Wendell Argabrite, Jon Benedetti, Robert Dean, LeJay Grafious, Matthew Orsie, Casey Rucker, and Mindy Waldron

Reference

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Learning About the Primitive Plants

Robert Burrell

The last frontier of natural history, for many of us, might be to tackle the common, more primitive plants that cover the ground, rocks, and trees in the various habitats we travel in our quest to find birds, trees, ferns, and wildflowers. Who has not wondered what names the abundant mosses and liverworts, lichens, and even slime molds go by? Are these mysterious living things learnable? When it comes to birds, trees, flowers, and ferns, there has always been a good deal of expertise in the BBC. Moreover, we have strong minorities quite knowledgeable about mammals, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, and damselflies. In recent years, there have been even more people who have developed quite an interest in mushrooms and other fungi. The knowledge of these folks at Foray and field trips rubs off on many of the rest of us, and this is one of the strongest attributes of the BBC, the sharing of knowledge about natural history. We have never been just a bird club.

In addition to native inquisitiveness, learning about the various types of biota has been greatly advanced by the wide availability of first rate guide books and identification manuals. Roger Tory Peterson set a high standard with his introduction of highly informative field guides, and this tradition has continued to expand with many field guides now available for bird and plant identification. The growing knowledge about mushrooms has been greatly enhanced by the publication of first-rate field guides.

There has been a conspicuous lack of public information for the naturalist, however, when it comes to learning something about the bryophytes, which include the mosses and liverworts. We have all seen these beautiful plants on just about any field trip we take, and who has not wondered what the individual types might be called or how they reproduce and eke out a living amongst so many other forms of life? There is very little in the way of field guides available for mosses, and none are found in the Peterson Guide series. An older field guide of the W.C. Brown *How To Know* series, by Henry S. Conrad (and later with Paul S. Redfearn Jr.), has been available for many years, but anyone trying to use it quickly finds out that this is not for the field naturalist in that so many of the details, even at the genus level, require the use of a compound microscope.

This puts the game at an entirely different level. Nature lovers who are used to making identifications based upon such easily observable characteristics as wing bars, flight patterns, and mating calls will be put off if they have to take the specimen home to dissect it in preparation for microscopic examination. Identifying wild flowers and even ferns based on an overall gestalt impression of the plant seen while driving by in an automobile is completely out of the question regarding bryophytes. Most

of us know a few by sight, for instance, the very common *Sphagnum* species, which are so much a part of terrain we love to explore at Dolly Sods and Cranberry Glades. Did you know that there are 20 species of *Sphagnum* in West Virginia? Many of us might be familiar, also, with common *Polytrichum* mosses, but rare is the individual who can differentiate a true moss from a liverwort.

Fortunately, help is available although not yet at the level of the Peterson guides, mostly for the technical reasons alluded to above. A wonderful little guide entitled, *Outstanding Mosses and Liverworts of Pennsylvania and Nearby States* (which would include Ohio and West Virginia), written by Susan Munch, can go a long way toward whetting your appetite and curiosity for these beautiful plants. Lavishly illustrated with color photographs, the spiral bound volume lies flat on the table while you work with your collection, something that would be nice to see with other guidebooks. Munch introduces the naturalist to about 50 different types of bryophytes, most to the genus level, but some even to species. She has picked the most common plants as well as those identifiable without a microscope. Technical language is kept to a minimum although there is a glossary to explain the few technical words necessary to describe unique characteristics. The great little book is available directly from the author for \$18 (includes shipping). To order, contact Dr. Munch at 49 Water St., Oley, PA 19547.

One other publication may be of additional interest for identifying bryophytes, although it is not helpful in identifying unknowns, and that is an annotated checklist of all the bryophyte species that have been found in West Virginia. It tells where each species has been found, and in what kind of habitat it exists. The West Virginia checklist was compiled by Susan Studlar, Stephen L. Stephenson, and Paul J. Harmon. It may be recalled that Susan Studlar led a moss and liverwort field trip for us at a fall BBC meeting at Valley Falls State Park in 2006. Check on availability of this publication from Publications, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241.

What about the primitive plants you see so often on your field trips, those that are among the hardiest organisms on the planet, capable of surviving in the most extreme habitats and weather conditions—the lichens? Ruggedly beautiful to the naked eye, they are even more intriguing when viewed with a hand lens. Many of us know Reindeer Moss, British Soldiers, and Rock Tripe, but what of the many other species so commonly encountered. Don't fret—help has arrived in the form of a wonderful identification manual entitled *The Macrolichens in West Virginia* by Don G. Flenniken. This wonderful manual defines the technical things to look for (many requiring the use of a hand lens) and includes a glossary. A key to the genera is fairly easy to use and after having arrived at the appropriate genus, additional keys help you try to arrive at a species identification. Each species is described in detail and information is given as to habitat where one finds it and in what West Virginia counties it has been found. The format is similar to that of Strausbaugh and Core's

manual for the vascular plants of West Virginia. Flenniken's manual includes color plates illustrating each lichen species described. It is available for \$32.88 (includes tax and shipping) from Publications, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 67, Elkins, WV 26241. Also, you can still obtain a 1979 guide to nationwide lichen identification written by Mason Hale, who did much of his collecting in West Virginia. It is part of the *How To Know* nature series and is available from Amazon.com.

For the most puzzling organisms of all, the slime molds, there is even a guide that helps to identify 18 of the most common slime molds you are likely to notice. One of the most notable slime molds is seen early every summer by anyone who gardens, and that is the brilliant yellow mass resembling scrambled eggs covering mulch or vegetative litter. Want to know more? By using the following Web site at <http://www.wvdnr.gov/Wildlife/PDFFiles/slimemolds.pdf>, you are directed to a one-page guide of 18 full-color images of commonly encountered species in West Virginia. Simply run this off on your printer, and if you have access to a laminator, you can "plasticize" it for permanent safe-keeping. More detailed information about slime mold identification can be obtained from *Myxomycetes: A Handbook of Slime Molds*, an illustrated paperback by Steven Stephenson (a former Fairmont State College professor) and Henry Stempen.

Armed with these publications, one can easily gain an appreciation and even some specific information about these intriguing parts of our natural world.

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Field Notes Winter Season

December, 2008–February, 2009

James Triplett and Beverly Triplett, Editors

The weather in West Virginia for this winter season was well within the average range for both temperature and precipitation, as recorded by the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. The average temperature was 32.1°F and the average precipitation was 9.71 inches.

These notes were gathered from the National Audubon Society sponsored West Virginia Bird Listserv and from field notes submitted to the editors by e-mail and regular mail. Members of local bird clubs who participated in their Christmas Bird Counts also contributed to these notes. 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: www.list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html. The editors sincerely appreciate the efforts of these contributors. These field notes are not intended to represent all of the observations of birds in West Virginia, but are only from the contributors listed herein.

Ducks, Swans, and Geese—**Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen in Kanawha County (WA, JBT, MF, 1/15), Putnam County (RH, 2/25), and Wood County (MBC, 1/3). A **Bar-headed Goose**, an exotic visitor, was present in Kanawha County during most of the winter season with the **Canada Geese** on the Kanawha River between Patrick Street and Kanawha City (JBT, WA, MF, 1/14, 1/15). **Snow Geese** were seen in several counties, including Hardy (MO, 1/24), Jefferson (DM, 1/23; MO, 1/26), Mason (WA, 2/13), Putnam (RH, SC, 12/27), and Raleigh (SP, 2/23). **Snow Geese** were seen at two different locations by two groups of birders in Kanawha County during the Christmas Bird Count on January 3. One group was comprised of Donald Morton, Marilyn Morton, Jackie Hudnall, Ashley Hudnall, and Beverly Wright, who saw the bird at a pond at Dow Tech Park in South Charleston. The other group included Kimberly Kamierski and Maggi Perl who saw a **Snow Goose** at Ridenour Lake in Nitro. A **Ross's Goose** was seen in Kanawha (JBT, 1/15), and Mason (WA, 2/13; R2B, 2/21) Counties. **Cackling Geese** appeared in six counties. During the Handlan Bird Club Christmas Count, Kimberly Kamierski and Maggi Perl counted three **Cackling Geese** with some **Canada Geese** on the pond at Ridenour Park in Nitro, Kanawha County, on January 3. Other counties reporting **Cackling Geese** were Jefferson (MO, 1/12), Mineral (LeJ, 12/20), Pleasants (JB, 1/17), Preston (GF, 1/10), and Wood (JT, 1/15). **Canada Geese** were reported in 15 counties. **Mute Swans** were seen in Jefferson County, February 28, by Matthew Orsie and by Wilma Jarrell, January 26, in Wetzel County. **Tundra Swans** were sighted in Jefferson County (DM, 12/23), Kanawha County (JBT, 1/14), Monongalia County (LeJ, 12/11), and Wood County (MBC, 1/9).

Wood Ducks, Gadwalls, American Wigeons, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Northern Pintails, Green-winged Teals, Canvasbacks, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, Scaup sp., Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, all three **Mergansers,** and **Ruddy Ducks** were seen throughout the state. The Morgantown Audubon Club, listed 201 **Ruddy Ducks** on their CBC. Gary Rankin spotted a pair of **Surf Scoters** drifting down the Ohio River on December 25 in Cabell County. **White-winged Scoters** were seen in Monongalia County on December 11 by LeJay Graffious and in Wood County by Jon Benedetti on January 29. **Northern Shovelers** were noted in two counties: Mason (R2B, 1/1/09) and Putnam (GR, 1/11/09).

Pheasants, Grouse, and Turkeys—Matthew Orsie reported **Ruffed Grouse** on December 18 in Pocahontas County. Ten counties reported **Wild Turkeys**.

Loons, Grebes—**Common Loons** were seen in six counties. Fifteen sightings of **Pied-billed Grebes** were noted. Edward Smith observed 19 **Pied-billed Grebes** on the Kanawha River at the Handlan Bird Club CBC on January 3. The 24 **Pied-billed Grebes** in Kanawha County was a record for this species on their CBC since 1944. Eight reports of **Horned Grebes** and three reports of **Red-necked Grebes** were noted. Ryan Tomazin and Carl Slater saw a **Red-necked Grebe** January 3 in the Ohio River near Wheeling Island on the Wheeling CBC. On January 15, John Tharp II found an **Eared Grebe** in Pleasants County, at French Creek. Tharp said, “The bird was quite cooperative, giving good looks at all of the critical field marks.” Jeanette Esker noted that seeing the winter plumage of the **Eared Grebe** was new for a few lucky members of the Mountwood Bird Club.

Cormorants, Herons, and Egrets—**Double-crested Cormorants** were reported in four counties: Kanawha (HBC, 1/3), Mason (R2B, 1/27), Putnam (CE, 12/19), and Wood (MBC, 1/9). On January 4, James Triplett and Beverly Triplett counted 27 **Double-crested Cormorants** at the Winfield Locks and Dam in Putnam County. **Great Blue Herons** were reported in 10 counties. Richard Esker and Carl Radcliffe counted 123 **Great Blue Heron** nests in the rookeries on Fish Creek and Grape Islands on February 9. These islands are part of the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge (ORINWR). Richard Esker reported that the number of nests was down from 140 in 2007 and approximately 150 for the five years before 2007.

Vultures—**Black Vultures** were seen in eight counties and in higher numbers than usual in most areas. Cynthia Ellis counted 14 **Black Vultures** feeding on a deer carcass in a field near her home in Putnam County on January 1. **Turkey Vultures** were reported in all areas and in good numbers.

Hawks, Eagles, Accipiters, and Falcons—**Ospreys** were seen in Jefferson County (MO, 12/5) and Summers County (JJP, 1/9). **Bald Eagles** were noted in 12 counties. **Golden Eagles** were found in nine counties this winter season, with both adults and juveniles being noted. **Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Cooper’s Hawks, Red-Shouldered Hawks, Red-Tailed Hawks,** and **Rough-legged Hawks** were all seen in good numbers. On December 14, Rodney Bartgis saw a **Northern Goshawk**

in Tucker County. **American Kestrels** were found in 13 counties. **Merlins** were noted in Berkley (MO, 2/8), Monongalia (GF, 12/4), Ohio (R2B, 2/7), and Preston (GF, 1/2) Counties. **Peregrine Falcons** were noted in four counties: Jefferson (MO), Kanawha (JBT, DB, and CBW), Putnam (CE) and Wood (MBC).

Rails and Coots—Matthew Orsie saw a **Virginia Rail** on January 1 at Altona Marsh in Jefferson County. **American Coots** were reported in eight counties.

Plovers and Sandpipers—Eight counties had sightings reported of **Killdeer**. Cabell County (R2B, 12/13) and Tucker County (CR, 1/10) had observations of **Wilson's Snipes**. **American Woodcocks** were spotted in five counties: Kanawha (DB, 2/28), Mason (TI, 2/7), Randolph (RB, 2/13), Summers (JJP, 2/13), and Wayne (TI, 2/7).

Gulls and Terns—The winter season brought about an influx of some rare gulls for West Virginia. David Patick, Wendell Argabrite, and Mike Griffith had good looks at an **Iceland Gull** in Mason County on January 29. They observed a dark juvenile **Iceland Gull** standing right next to a Juvenile **Glaucous Gull**. Wilma Jarrell saw a juvenile **Glaucous Gull** with a group of over 200 **Ring-billed Gulls** on January 24 at Hannibal Locks, Wetzel County. Gary Rankin and Wendell Argabrite found a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** on February 5 and a **Great Black-backed Gull** on January 29 in Mason County. A **Great Black-backed Gull** was also seen on February 2 by Wilma Jarrell in Wetzel County and by John Tharp II and Jon Benedetti at Willow Island (1/17), Pleasants County. John Tharp II also observed a first year **Great Black-backed Gull** near Belmont, Pleasants County, at Point Park on January 19. The **Ring-billed Gulls** and **Herring Gulls** were seen in most areas of the state during the winter season. **Bonaparte's Gulls** were found in Brooke County (JLC, 1/25), Putnam County (JBT, 12/20), and Wood County (DJE, 12/2).

Rock Pigeons and **Mourning Doves** were reported in 19 counties.

Owls—John Boback saw two **Eastern Screech-Owls**, one red phase and one gray, in Monongalia County on January 14. This owl was also listed in Summers County (CBC) and Wood County (MBC). **Great Horned Owls** and **Barred Owls** were reported during the winter season in many areas of the state. James and Louise Casto saw **Short-eared Owls** in Brooke County on February 15 and the Route 2 Birders noted **Short-eared Owls** in Mason County on February 7.

Belted Kingfishers were noted all winter by Hullet Good at Coonskin Park, Kanawha County. Wood County birders (MBC) also reported **Belted Kingfishers** throughout the winter period.

Woodpeckers—All seven species of woodpeckers on the state checklist were observed around the state all winter. James Triplett and Beverly Triplett watched two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** at Mt. Zion Church, Mason County, on February 3. On January 23, James Phillips noted that he had two **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** feeding at suet cakes and on winter berries that were near the feeders at the nature center in Pipestem State Park, Summers County.

Flycatchers—Eastern Phoebes were seen in five counties: Berkley (CD, 1/3), Cabell (GR, 12/25), Kanawha (HBC, 1/3), Putnam (CE, 12/3), and Summers (CBC, 12/20). Cynthia Ellis noted that at 8:45 a.m., on January 15, with snow cover and a temperature of 16° F, an **Eastern Phoebe** was singing at her home in Putnam County.

Shrikes—Matthew Orsie saw a **Loggerhead Shrike** in Jefferson County on December 5 and on January 4. Kathy King had a great look at a **Loggerhead Shrike** on January 3 on the Hardy County CBC. On January 5, David Williams saw a **Northern Shrike** on Pine Grove Road near Green Bank in Pocahontas County.

Vireos—James and Judy Phillips observed a **Blue-headed Vireo** in Summers County on December 17.

Crows, Jays, and Ravens—Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens were commonly reported throughout the state. Doren Burrell and Laura Miller, with the Handlan Bird Club, Kanawha County, noted 11,900 crows at the roost in Charleston. The total number of crows recorded in Kanawha County on their CBC was 12,086.

Larks and Swallows—Horned Larks were seen in very large flocks this winter in Hardy County, (MO, 1/11), Jefferson County (JL, 12/13; MO, 12/27), Mason County, and Randolph County (WT, 1/23) by many birders during January and February. **Tree Swallows** were reported in Jefferson County (CD, 2/16) and Mineral County (MO, 2/4).

Chickadees, Nuthatches, and Creepers—Chickadee sp. and Tufted Titmice were observed in good numbers around the entire state. **Red-breasted Nuthatches** and **White-breasted Nuthatches** were found in the appropriate habitats in most areas of the state throughout the winter period. **Brown Creepers** were observed by many contributors in most areas reporting.

Wrens and Kinglets—Carolina Wrens were commonly seen in most areas. Robert Tallman listed one **House Wren** on the results of the Elkins Christmas Count, Randolph County, held on January 2. **Winter Wrens** were commonly listed. Hullet Good noted that he had his usual pair of **Carolina Wrens** at his feeders in Kanawha County all winter. Good said that another **Carolina Wren** showed up in his basement, minus tail feathers! **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** and **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were noted in many areas.

Thrushes—Eastern Bluebirds were common most of the winter. In Kanawha County, Hullet Good made note of *no Eastern Bluebirds* from mid-December through early February. One observation of a **Swainson's Thrush** was made by Bruni Haydl on December 27. **Hermit Thrushes** and **American Robins** were commonly listed in most areas.

Mimics—Northern Mockingbirds were frequently seen around the state. **Brown Thrashers** were reported in Cabell County (DP, 2/7) and Randolph County (RT, 1/31) during the winter season.

European Starlings were noted in 10 counties. Hullet Good said that the

European Starlings were *rarely* seen at his suet feeders in Kanawha County this winter. The Greenbrier County CBC listing of a total of 3,925 **European Starlings** on December 21 contrasted with the lack of the birds at Good's house.

Pipets and Waxwings—Three counties made note of **American Pipets**: Cabell (R2B, 1/31), Hardy (MO, 1/24), and Mason (R2B, 1/31). **Cedar Waxwings** were commonly reported in most areas.

Warblers—**Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen in nine counties during most of the winter. **Yellow-throated Warblers** were seen by James and Judy Phillips in Summers County on December 5. Matthew Orsie remarked on February 26, that he found his earliest **Pine Warbler** singing that afternoon along the road that leads to Altona Marsh. David Patick, Gary Rankin, and Michael Griffith noted the **Palm Warbler** on January 1 in Mason County at the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam.

Towhees, Sparrows, Juncos, Longspurs, and Buntings—**Eastern Towhees** were noted in most areas. **American Tree Sparrows** were frequently seen in all areas reporting. **Chipping Sparrows** were reported in three counties: Kanawha (HBC, 1/3), Preston (GF, 12/13, 1/1), and in Wood County by Tina McPeck in her yard. **Field Sparrows** were listed in eight counties. Stanley Roach found **Lark Sparrows** and **Lincoln's Sparrows** at his feeders, just west of Martinsburg, Berkeley County, most of the winter. Birders in four counties noted **Savannah Sparrows**: Jefferson (MO, 2/7), Mason (GR, 12/25), Summers (JJP, 2/10), and Wood County (DE, 1/17). **Fox Sparrows** were recorded in Cabell County (R2B, 1/31), Jefferson County (MO, 2/28), Kanawha County (HG, 2/4), and Wood County (MBC, 1/3). **Song Sparrows** were frequently spotted throughout the state. **Swamp Sparrows** were observed in seven counties. Commonly seen throughout the state were **White-throated Sparrows**. While birding along Williams River Road, Rt. 17-4, Pocahontas County, on December 20, David Patick and Michael Griffith saw an adult **Harris's Sparrow** feeding along the street with a flock of **Pine Siskins**. **White-crowned Sparrows** were listed in Greenbrier County (JBT, 1/17), Mercer County (CBC, 12/23), Putnam County (CE, 2/9), Randolph County (RT, 1/9), and Wood County (JB, 12/4). **Dark-eyed Juncos** were frequent winter residents around the state. **Lapland Longspurs** were noted in plowed fields along with **Horned Larks** in Jefferson County (MO, 12/27) and in Mason County by many birders during January and February. **Snow Buntings** were also in the mix with the **Lapland Longspurs** and **Horned Larks** in Mason County. On February 7, James and Louise Casto reported seeing more than 200 **Snow Buntings** and about 20 **Horned Larks** in corn stubble in fields about 10 miles from the West Virginia border in Pennsylvania on State Rt. 844. **Snow Buntings** were also seen in Jefferson County (DM, 1/2) and Marshall County (SS, 2/30).

Cardinals—**Northern Cardinals** were seen in good numbers throughout the state during the entire winter period. Gary Felton had **Indigo Buntings** at his feeders in December.

Blackbirds, Grackles, Orioles, Meadowlarks—**Red-winged Blackbirds** were

noted in 12 counties. **Eastern Meadowlarks** were seen in most areas. Ten counties had observations of **Rusty Blackbirds**. David Patick, Gary Rankin, and Michael Griffith saw a flock of about 80 **Brewer's Blackbirds** by a farm feeding near a pile of manure, about 10 miles south from Rt. 2 on Rt. 35 South, Mason County, on January 1. **Common Grackles** were observed in seven counties. **Brown-headed Cowbirds** were noted in two counties, Roane (BSMS, 1/30) and Wood (MBC, 1/3).

Siskins, Crossbills, and allies—This was the year of the northern finches throughout West Virginia and surrounding states, according to all reports. Significant irruptions of **Pine Siskins** and **White-winged Crossbills** allowed many folks their first up close and personal views of these species. **Purple Finches, House Finches, and American Goldfinches** were seen in good numbers throughout the state, as usual. Nicholas County (CE, 2/26), Pocahontas County (RT, 12/14), and Tucker County (CBC, 12/15) all had good numbers of **Red Crossbills**. In most instances, the **Red Crossbills** were seen near the **White-winged Crossbills**. The great thrills, however, were the extremely large numbers of **Pine Siskins** statewide. Unfortunately, it seemed quite a few of them around feeders became ill with *Salmonella* infections. It was recommended that feeders be removed, disinfected, and the ground around the feeders cleaned as well. As of the end of February, the **Pine Siskins** showed no signs of moving back to their more northern territories and were reported in tremendous numbers all over the state. Donald Morton, from St. Albans, Kanawha County, reported that he had the friendly **Pine Siskins** actually eating from his hand. The **White-winged Crossbills**, though not as numerous as the thousands of **Pine Siskins**, were in great numbers in 11 counties. They loved conifer seeds and were seen from the high mountains to the Ohio River low country. In nearby Marietta, Ohio, on January 1, Barbara and Neal Hohman had a **Common Redpoll** at their feeder with about 50 **Pine Siskins**. In West Virginia, the **Common Redpoll** was seen in Marshall County (SS, 1/30), Monongalia County (BEJ, 1/11), Wetzel County (WJ, 1/25), and Wood County (JT, 2/5). The **House Sparrow** was a resident statewide.

Contributors—Wendell Argabrite (WA), Rodney Bartgis (RB), Jon Benedetti (JB), Deborah Beutler (DBe), John Boback (JBo), Doren Burrell (DB), Christmas Bird Counts (CBC), James and Louise Casto (JLC), Carol Del-Colle (CD), Cynthia Ellis (CE), Richard and Jeanette Esker (DJE), Richard Esker (DE), Jeanette Esker (JE), Gary Felton (GF), Michael Forman (MF), Hullet Good (HG), Michael Griffith (MG), Handlan Bird Club (HBC), LeJay Graffious (LeJ), Bruni Haydl (BH), Roger Hardway and Sharon Cook (RHSC), Robert Hilton (RH), Barbara and Neal Hohman (BNH), Tom Igou (TI), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), William and Emily Johnson (BEJ), Kimberly Kazmierski (KK), John Little (JL), Tina McPeck (TMc), Mountwood Bird Club (MBC), Donald Morton (DMo), David Myles (DM), Matthew Orsie (MO), David Patick (DP), Maggi Perl (MP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Carl Radcliffe (CRd), Gary Rankin (GR), Stanley Roach (SR), [David Patick, Wendell Argabrite, Michael Griffith, Gary Rankin]—the Rt. 2 Birders (R2B), Casey Rucker (CR), Scott Shalaway (SS), Carl Slater (CS), Robert

Summers and Margaret Straley (BSMS), Robert Tallman (RT), John Tharp II (JT), William Tolin (WT), Ryan Tomazin (RTo), James and Beverly Triplett (JBT), Charles and Beverly Wright (CBW).

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Erratum

In *The Redstart*, 74(4), 133-137, October 2007, “Recovery Records of the American Robin” by Ralph K. Bell, in the table: the robin that carried band number 532-11115 was captured on October 16, 1955, not 1965, and the recovery date for the robin with band number 702-93233 was March 1969, not 1968.