

December 2018

Friends,

Looking back, I found that the last "real" letter I sent out was in December 2017. So, emails have replaced the Newsletters that have been sent out to members for many years. Can't say if it is good or bad, or just the way things are now days.

In 2018 we had our eagle surveys in January and March. It is so wonderful to see the number of eagles in our area and the number of people who come out in all kinds of weather to just get a glimpse of one of these awesome birds. We have also recorded the number of bald eagle nests in our area. There are more and more nests, and at least we hope, permanent resident birds staying in the area to raise their young. It's a difficult job for all birds (and plants and other animals) to survive and raise the next generation. Jim Phillips has done a great job taking on the responsibility of these surveys. The "Eagle Brigade" is also diligent in their responsibilities to monitor the eagles and their nests. We have useful information due to their hard work. Thanks to all involved.

Our Spring Bird Count in May gives us very important data on the number of birds migrating into our area. Jim Phillips began both the Spring Migration Count and the Christmas CBC almost 50 years ago and has kept it going. We're going to be celebrating these accomplishments for Jim and Bibbee Nature Club in the next couple of years. The 2019 Christmas Count is number 49. 2020 will be the year for that party. I'm giving you plenty of time to think of a great way we can celebrate.

The Hawk Watch on East River Mountain was held for many years by Bibbee Nature Club members. Then the days on the mountain in the fall stopped for several reasons. In the last 5 years we've started counting again on the mountain. Not with the number of days that were given to the counts before, but we have 1 day there in the fall. Jim Phillips makes it to the mountain on a few more occasions when he can.

This past October the Big Sit was just not any fun. It was cold, windy and rainy on that day. So, the day was cut short and so was our count.

We're in December and we are just getting started with the Christmas Counts. Pipestem CBC last Saturday is recording 59 species for the day. It was not a bad weather day, so to speak. There were just not many birds out doing their thing. The Raleigh CBC on the next day, was miserable weather. It rained most of the day. The tally of 43 was a little below that of past years. I'll email the results of the other counts after the fact. I can't help but wonder about the low numbers of some of the species that we used to see in high numbers. White-throated sparrows and dark-eyed juncos, we just don't get the numbers we used to. Are there fewer birds, or have they changed their migrations?

This past year we planted trees at Camp Creek State Park/Forest as a Memorial Orchard for Bibbee Nature Club. We purchased 24 trees (apple, pear, and chestnut). We planted 14 in one area and 10 in another part of the Forest. We put wire cages around each tree to help keep it safe from deer. Hopefully the trees will provide food and cover for birds and animals. Here is a photo of the main orchard. We will have signs posted at both orchards specifying that the Club is responsible. We are thankful for all the help from the friends at Camp Creek State Park/Forest.



In 2019, we hope to carry out a project to provide a roosting tower for Chimney Swifts. Larry Helgerman, member of Brooks Bird Club, brought the project to Brooks for their support. His idea is for each affiliate club of Brooks to be responsible for building and monitoring a tower in their area of West Virginia. The project is still in its beginning phase, but we hope to have the tower in place for the return in the spring of the swifts. We need help. Money for materials is being supplied by Brooks Bird Club, but we need anyone who wants to help with construction to let me know.

Bibbee Nature Club will have events in 2019. There are several that are the usual repeats for the Club. We'd love to hear of any ideas that you have on a location to visit or activity. Hopefully, you will get involved with the Club and participate in the activities. Again, this year (2019) Bibbee Nature Club is not requiring dues to participate. We welcome anyone with an interest in nature to join us.

I'm sending this letter out as part of an email to those with addresses. Anyone who doesn't have an email address will receive the Newsletter and Schedule through postal mail.

Our first event in 2019 is our Eagle Survey on January 12<sup>th</sup>. We gather at points along the New, Bluestone, and Greenbrier Rivers from 10 AM to 2 PM to observe and count both eagle species. We'll meet at the Hinton DQ after that to tally up our sightings. We hope the weather will cooperate with our plans.

If you have any sightings from nature that you'd like to share, please send them to me. Allen and I were Colorado in early December for babysitting duty. Always a great pleasure. We have a most special granddaughter. She loves the outdoors and can id eagles and other creatures. We were "gosh darn lucky" to look out their window one morning and see 4 wolves running through an open field about 1 mile from the house. We watched one wolf chase, kill, and eat a jackrabbit while another wolf watched. They hunted for a while longer before going out of view. I don't figure the ranch owner would enjoy the sighting as I did, since his horses and cattle use the field.

We have copies of Bird Watcher's Digest if anyone would like to have them. Drop me a note.

Take care and keep in touch.  
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

Mindy Waldron  
Bibbee Nature Club