



THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA
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RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note

It was a very interesting spring migration, and spring overall. Early warmth gave way to lots of rain and cooler temperatures, holding back the birds and flowers for a couple of weeks. When things finally got going, they really caught fire. Large numbers of migrants showed up fast, but stayed around for all to enjoy. Tennessee Warblers were especially numerous, and rarities showed (see stories inside). The trees seemed to all leaf out overnight, and now, summer is nigh.

By the time you receive this, we'll have a wealth of great birds, preferably make it for one reason or another, of images from many of the 70 years. These came from the BBC archives, Ken Anderson, Mike Breiding, Emricks, the Conrads and Karl Bag, due out in September, should highlands and bogs.



Spruce Knob lake, sans trees, in 1953

all be at Foray, hopefully enjoying a dry. To help cheer up those who can't on page 5 you'll find a photo collage of Forays in Pocahontas County. and include photos and slides from the Mastellers, the Higbees, the Haller. The next issue of the Mail chronicle all of our exploits in the

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JANICE EMRICK

I was sitting here getting ready for Foray in a couple of weeks and was thinking about the Brooks Bird Club and how to get the most out of your membership in the Club. I have noticed that there are certain people who attend certain events, but none of the other events the club has to offer. For instance, there are some members that only go to Foray and nothing else. There are some members that only attend their local chapter meetings and outings. Some people only go on the Eastern Shore trip in November. Some members never attend anything at all.

I realize that members cannot afford the time or the money to go to all events. If you only have a week's vacation, then you have to prioritize where you spend it. But most of our events are really quite affordable in terms of money. Where else can you attend a nature camp for 8 days that is only \$200 and includes all meals, speakers, and lodging? Where else can you go for a weekend getaway for \$150 a person and it also includes your meals, speakers, and lodging? No place that I have found! So it may pay to look at our events and try to include more of them in your birding plans. You also get to make new friends and new memories! So I hope more of you make the most out of your membership and join us in more events.

– Janice Emrick, BBC President

BBC-THREE RIVERS BIRD CLUB JOINT OUTING REPORT

As we usually do, the Brooks Bird Club and Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Birding Club had a joint outing on the third Saturday in April. The weather, as usual was only semi-cooperative, with

cool temperatures and weather that held the migrants back. In the end, twenty-three birders found forty-five species of birds, as well as a reasonable number of spring wildflowers. Lunch was again very good, as it is when we have so many birders (i.e., cooks), and some members took the opportunity to sample food from the Dutch Oven Society cookout that always shares the picnic area with us.

Bird highlights included two very visible Osprey, Buffleheads, Red-breasted Mergansers, a Brown Thrasher and Solitary Sandpipers. Only three species of warblers!

Next year's outing looks to be on a different day, as Easter will be later.



*Meeting near the old oak trees -
Photo by Dallas DiLeo*



SANDHILL CRANES REPORTED AT STAUFFER'S MARSH

— *Story and photo contributed by Steve Hartmann*

My work at Stauffer's Marsh provides occasional sightings. On March 11, 2014, I found four Sandhill Cranes. These being the first I'd seen in West Virginia, I contacted (birder) Matt Orsie. Before Matt could arrive, the cranes were alarmed by a fisherman and departed. When Matt arrived, he was disappointed. It would have been only the second confirmed sighting of cranes in the Eastern Panhandle, and a first for Berkeley County.

In late afternoon of March 18, 2018, a friend phoned to say that a natural resources officer casually mentioned seeing Sandhill Cranes in a corn field east of Shanghai in Berkeley County. With scope, camera and wife, I arrived at 5 PM at the reported location and confirmed five cranes (2 adults, 3 young) with photographs. The rare sighting was just the beginning. After half an hour, the birds flew south towards Stauffer's Marsh.

I contacted Josh Vance, the WV DNR officer who mentioned the cranes. He confirmed seeing the group on March 5-9 and several subsequent dates, and that one of the adults was hopping on one leg. Close examination of my photos revealed one adult appeared to have damage to the left leg just below the knee joint. The farmer of the land confirmed he had seen the birds for four or five weeks, beginning in late February. As it turned out, my March 18th photos were the last known sighting of the group.

On March 20th, I returned to Stauffer's Marsh and observed what appeared to be a crane fly directly overhead and land in the marsh. Its legs trailing behind looked abnormal (twisted). I returned on March 24th and located the bird in dense vegetation, in company with geese and Black Ducks.

Josh Vance reported the single crane again on March 30th. Bob Dean observed the bird on March 29th with Stan Roach, and reported it had lost half of one leg. The bird was reported to eBird on April 11th at Stauffer's Marsh.

I believe this unusual sequence of sightings was the result of injury to the adult crane upon arrival at Stauffer's Marsh. The migrating "family" stalled for several weeks because the injured bird could only fly a few hundred yards and the healthy adult was restrained by the pair bond. Between March 18th and 20th, the urge to migrate broke the pair bond and the healthy adult resumed migration with the three juveniles. The injured bird continues to take refuge at Stauffer's Marsh. It is foraging and evading predators. If it can adapt to the injury, it may continue migration or return south before winter. The bird is in an area that is closed to the public and as land manager I respectfully request it be left unmolested.

CONTACT THE EDITOR

Have an interesting story about the nature around your neck of the woods? Want to contribute an article or travelogue? Have a nature-related event that you'd like to tell the Club about? Please contact me by mail, email or phone:

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348 Station Street, Apt. 7
Bridgeville, PA 15017
412-220-9726
wwwarblers@hotmail.com



CORRESPONDENCE

We would love to hear from members of the BBC. What have you been doing? Have you taken recent trips? What interesting birds or plants have you seen in your locality or backyard?

The Club looks forward to little notes on Christmas cards and dues notices, but feel free to get in touch with us at other times of the year too. Even just a line or two would be of interest to our readers, especially if we haven't seen or heard from you in a while.

Correspondence may be mailed to: Juanita Slater, Corresponding Secretary, c/o BBC, PO Box 4077, Wheeling, WV 26003.

For those of you who prefer email, correspondences may be sent to: jslater1120@yahoo.com

2018 SPRING BIG DAY RESULTS

As part of eBird's Global Big Day on May 5, I did a Big Day solely within Wood County. Starting at Mountwood Park at 4:55 am and ending at Point Park at 6:10 pm, I was surprised at my final total of 90 species; I had expected 75.

I spent 4 hours at McDonough Wildlife Park in Vienna, and that's where most of the warblers, vireos, thrushes, and other Neotropical migrants were seen.

Highlights included Great Egret--3 at Sandy Creek backwater; Osprey--1 at Northwest Drive and 1 at Belleville Lock and Dam; Eastern Whip-poor-will--1 at Mountwood Park; Bank Swallow--2 at Belleville wetlands; Cliff Swallow--10 gathering mud at the Williamstown boat ramp for nests on the bridge from Williamstown to Marietta, OH and 23 at the Belleville wetlands; Veery---McDonough; Swainson's Thrush; 15 species of warblers; White-crowned Sparrow--1 at Belleville wetlands; Summer Tanager--Mountwood Park at Visitor Center; Bobolink--2 at Northwest Drive.

– Terry Bronson, Vienna, WV

I braved the elements on Sunday, May 7, to do my Big Day in Cabell and surrounding counties. From 6am until afternoon, precipitation varied from light to moderate/high, which presented an extra challenge all morning. Birding conditions improved in the afternoon and it turned out to be an excellent day, besting last year's total by three with 117 species observed. I missed a bunch of "gimmes". Highlights: Barred owl fly-by; getting the crap scared out of me by a flushed American Bittern; Chestnut-sided Warbler, large numbers of Cape May Warblers at McClintic WMA; Yellow-breasted Chat and Blackpoll/Blackburnian Warblers at multiple locations; and while waiting on Common Nighthawk to show, watching downtown Huntington's Chimney Swift feeding frenzy/tornado. It was like bird fireworks for an awesome, but challenging day.

– Josh Holland, Huntington, WV

The two birds walks were held for Migration Day at Little Beaver State Park on May 12th, and were a great success. Thanks to everyone who came on the walks, including the wonderful families with kids. Our young birders were awesome! Thanks to Ron and Wendy and everyone at TRAC for hosting a wonderful day. 42 species were noted, at least 3 with evidence of breeding.

– Bev Delidow, Birding in Raleigh Co.

The Pipestem WV Area/Bibbee Nature Club's 47th Century Day Bird Count netted 103 species. 11 people participated, and highlights included Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (new to the count), and 20 species of warblers (including a Canada).

One note: we got excited when we heard the call of the Summer Tanager (not a bird we usually get in Bluestone State Park). The brief glimpse of a reddish bird caused us to intensify our search for the bird. When the bird proceeded to land on a brush pile in the open, we discovered it was a Brown Thrasher. It repeated the tanager call and then added the call of a Whip-poor-will and a Bald Eagle before doing the typical thrasher song. It repeated the performance for some time.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

Saturday, May 12, was the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia's 7th Annual Morgantown Migratory Bird Day celebration. We had a great time! It was our best-attended MMBD to date -- we had between 45 and 50 people for the early bird walk on the Raven Rock Trail, and every seat was filled in the pavilion for our live raptor presentations (especially the early presentation -- people were sitting on the benches, the floor, on the walls, etc. It was difficult to get an accurate count, but definitely more than 100 people.) We had a "Bird Bingo" walk around the overlook area for kids, and we split into four groups because there were so many interested kids and parents. I'm sure the gorgeous weather helped with the success of the event!

The early bird walk was lead by Chris Lituma, Caden Haines, Paul Shaw, and myself, with assistance from Ethan Schnell, Hillary Shane, PJ Murray, Chris Rota, and several other excellent birders in attendance. We broke into four groups, but my group and Paul's group merged when a Cerulean Warbler was heard in the direction that both of our groups were heading.

We had amazing looks at a male and a female cerulean -- one of my best looks at a female cerulean, ever. She was foraging low along the trail while the male sang high in a tree overhead. Cerulean warbler was a life bird for most of our group members, including a birder who had traveled to West Virginia from Vermont in the hopes of seeing a cerulean -- there were a lot of happy people!

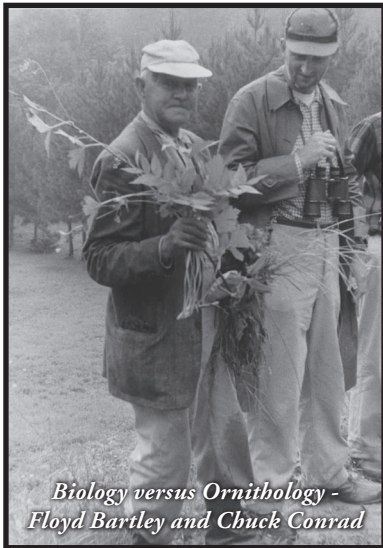
We also had great looks at Blackburnian, Hooded, and Black-and-white Warblers, American Redstarts, Ovenbirds, and Scarlet Tanagers. We also had a quick glimpse at a Bay-breasted Warbler and a heard-only Nashville Warbler.

Thank you again to our bird walk leaders, and to everyone who came out to our local celebration of World Migratory Bird Day. We hope you'll join us on May 11, 2019, for next year's celebration! For photos from the event, please visit the ACCA on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ACCAWV/

– Katie Fallon, Morgantown, WV

Derek Courtney, Matt Orsie, Gary Rankin and I did our annual Big Day on Saturday May 12th. We managed to tie our 4th highest Big Day record with 147 species observed. We birded in Cabell and Mason County and finished up in the mountains covering Nicholas and Pocahontas County. Our last species was the Northern Saw-whet Owl heard around 1045 pm on

(continued on Page 5)



*Biology versus Ornithology -
Floyd Bartley and Chuck Conrad*

DIRECTION of the Foray will be in the hands of Chuck Conrad, B.S.C. Headquarters, Wheeling, W. Va.; with Russell DeGarmo, Charleston, W. Va.; Pete Chandler, Chester, W. Va.; Larry Hicks, Columbus, Ohio; and Leroy Black, Pittsburgh, Pa., as associate directors ex-officio.

TRANSPORTATION to and from the camp will be up to the individual. Check with local train and bus officials for schedules to Bartow, W. Va., (U.S.250). From there a taxi will take you to Camp Thornwood. Folks having cars should get in touch with the Foray Director, and arrangements will be made to fill them if a vacancy exists. The costs of such transportation will be prorated among the passengers.

THE COST for the full time (9 days) including board, lodging, camp fee, field trips, and "snacks" will be \$25.00. At least \$5.00 of this amount should be sent in as registration fee, with the remaining \$20.00 to be paid on arrival at Camp Thornwood.

FORAY BEGINS with registration at Camp Saturday, June 12, 2:00 p.m. (supper at E.S.T., will be the first meal); and breakfast on Sunday, June 20.

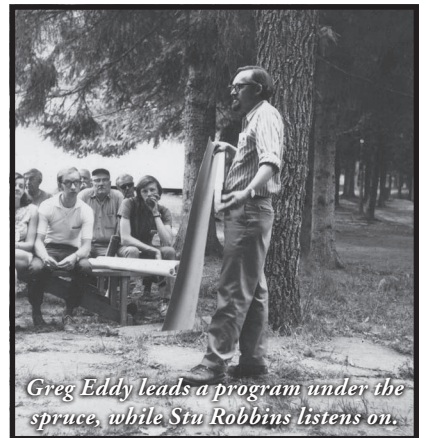
MAIL RESERVATION TO:
The Brooks Bird Club, Inc.
707 Warwood Avenue
Wheeling, West Virginia

Please enroll me for the 9th Annual Foray. I expect to arrive June _____ Lunch(), Supper(), and depart June _____ fast(), Lunch(), Supper().

Announcing
NINTH ANNUAL
FORAY
JUNE 12-20 1948



SPONSORED BY
THE BROOKS BIRD CLUBS, INC.
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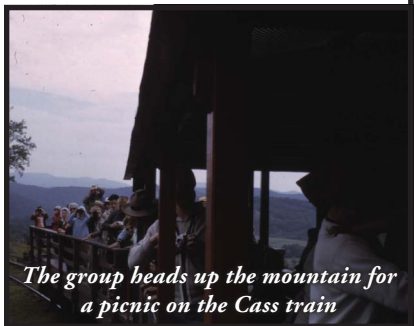


*Greg Eddy leads a program under the
spruce, while Stu Robbins listens on.*

Thornwood Forays Gone By...



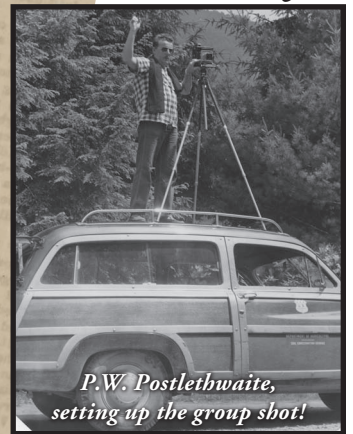
*'Doc' Hutton after another
good camp meal*



*The group heads up the mountain for
a picnic on the Cass train*



*"The short cut" or how to get lost -
George Hall in 1958.*



*P.W. Postlethwaite,
setting up the group shot!*



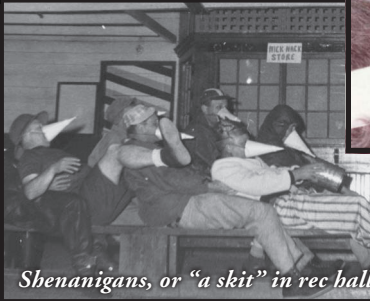
John Laitsch teaches ferns



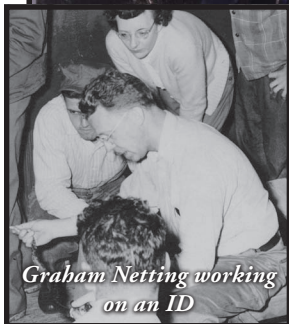
*The old-looking bunkhouse, same as the
new-looking bunkhouse...*



Frank Murphy records the birds



Shenanigans, or "a skit" in rec hall



*Graham Netting working
on an ID*



*Karl 'Mike' Haller, the "Great Birdman",
with "Karl's Covey", straight from Texas.*



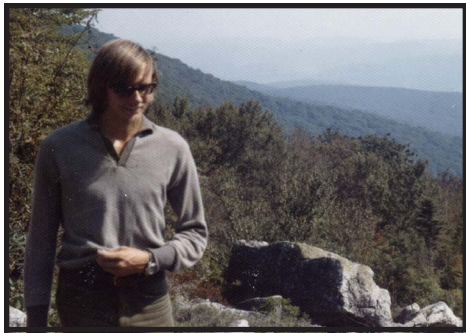
*Waiting for a meal, with Ben Burt (left), Fred Mc-
Cullough (back center) and Jay Bucklew (back right)*

STU ROBBINS PASSES SUDDENLY AT AGE 68



Stuart ("Stu") Bradley Robbins of Laurel, Maryland, died suddenly only one week into diagnosis and treatment of acute leukemia.

Stu was born in Laurel on June 12, 1950, son of Chandler S. and Eleanor C. Robbins. He graduated from Laurel High School in 1968 and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Western Maryland College. His second marriage was to Kathleen DeGraff in Dec., 1996.



At the banding station - Dolly Sods, 1974

During and after college, Stu was employed by Maryland Department of Corrections, YMCA (King's Landing Camp), and a Shell Service Station. He worked for C&P Telephone (later known as Bell Atlantic, then Verizon) for the next 32 years, as an operator, a lineman, and finally as a troubleshooting technician.



Stu & friend at 1977 Foray at Lost River



Stu with Ann Llewellyn, Dorothy Conrad & Carolyn Ruddle - Foray 1974

Stuart was a 50-plus-year member of the Maryland Ornithological Society and a 'life' member of the Brooks Bird Club where he served as a past president. He was also a member of the National Eagle Scout Association. Stu enjoyed traveling with his family on world birding adventures, visiting Trinidad, Panama, Spain, Ecuador, Australia, South Africa and more.

Stu's passion was working on and driving cars. He was a member of the National Corvette Museum. He founded the Corvette Pace Car Club and also participated in the Vintage Chevrolet Club of America. As you can tell, his favorite cars were Corvettes and other Chevrolets. He owned many over his lifetime.



Mid-Winter Meeting at Jackson's Mill, 1980 - Photo by Bill Higbee

As a youth at the First United Methodist Church of Laurel, and later with his wife Kathy at the First Alliance Church, Stu added his bass voice to the choir. Stuart is survived by siblings Jane and Nancy of Maryland, and George of New Hampshire, and nieces Melissa and Michelle. Survivors also include step-children Debbie, Stephen, and Jennie as well as step-grandchildren Koby, Mason and Victor

ria, Austin, Erin and Sydney, Connor, McKenzie and Meadow. Stuart could always be seen working on some project or assisting others with their projects. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 1968.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in Stuart's memory to the Brooks Bird Club, Wheeling, WV; the National Eagle Scout Association (NESA), Irving, TX; the First United Methodist Church of Laurel, Maryland; or to a charity of your choice. A memorial service was held at the First United Methodist Church of Laurel on April 14, 2018.



Chan, Kathy & Stu at Blackwater Falls during 2011 Tucker County Foray...they were all together then, and are all together now, in peace - Photo by Sally Egan

2018 Big Day Results (continued from Page 3)

the Scenic Highway. We birded from 330 am thru 1045 pm covering 388 auto miles. We got 31 warblers plus the Chat and all 3 goatsuckers including the Chuck-will's-widow. We heard both rails-the Virginia Rail and Sora. We had both Alder and Olive-sided Flycatcher at the Cranberry Glades Boardwalk. We weren't lucky with duck species and didn't see a Bald Eagle. It was a very satisfying and rewarding experience for all of us.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

Our Tucker County International Bird Day count yesterday, May 13, began with thunder and heavy rains ending around dawn, but turned into a sunny though windy day for birding. We had the usual surprising misses, but overall it was a good day with 111 species, including a good number of shorebirds and 22 species of warblers.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV

NOTES FROM ROSIE CAMPBELL



*Birding by the washed-out road –
photo by Rosie Campbell*

March 1-2 at Killbuck Marsh

– Fifteen BBCers met for birding at Killbuck Marsh in pouring rain. There had been lots of rain during the preceding week too; so we arrived to find many of the roads flooded. We traveled out each road as far as we could, looked for birds, then turned or backed out.

Visibility was limited by the rain, but we found lots of ducks. It seemed at first if the most of them were Ring-necked Ducks. Except for eagles, there

weren't as many raptors as we sometimes see. The ducks and the many Red-winged Blackbirds did not mind the flooded ground and continuous rain, but a marooned groundhog wasn't fairing so well. We also saw a Short-eared Owl perched high in a willow shrub.

After a very nice lunch at the Pine Tree Barn, we returned to the marsh for more birds and rain. The four sandhill cranes we found were some distance away. The day got colder as we went on. Supper, at a place near the hotel, was also good, but when we came out, the ground was covered with snow, and more falling.

Friday morning, the drivers all had to scrape their windows before we started, but the snow melted off quickly. That's not to say it was warm and balmy. It continued windy and wet. We found the red-headed woodpeckers at the usual spot, and went back to the flooded marsh roads. The eagles took center stage today. A mature pair treated us to a show of "synchronized" flying.

Shortly after that, we saw a group of big brown birds on the ground -- turkeys???? No! It was a group of eight immature Bald Eagles. They were all close together, having found something of interest to them. Nearby, a smaller raptor, (a harrier, I think,) made a kill. The eight young eagles converged on him and I doubt the tiny prey went far in a flock of hungry young eagles.

After lunch at the Rt. 83 Restaurant, (foot-long fish sandwiches!) we drove on to Time and Optics' Everyone enjoyed looking at the beautiful clocks and fine spotting scopes, binos and other bird gear. A new bird book, "A Bike and Backpack Big Year," by Norman Miller was on sale there.

March 2-3-4 at the Ohio Falconry end of the season meet – The headquarters was downtown Holloway at the Old Timers Building. (Look for the caboose.) We met there and drove out into the open country in a convoy for the hunt. Members of the Falconry Association, led by President Mick Brown, presented a demonstration of hunting rabbits/squirrels with a variety of hawks.

We were able to attend Saturday morning when the two hawks flown were both Harris tercel, (male hawks) Three, small, long-haired dachshunds and several beaters accompanied the hawk on the hunt. The beaters gave a whole new meaning to "beating the bush" as they thrashed the bushes and briars with big walking sticks while the little dogs scampered into the thick brush. We observers followed as best we could over the rough, boggy ground. The hawk would fly ahead a bit, perch and wait until the dogs and beaters passed, then fly ahead again.

The first rabbit up was able to get into a brush pile by a culvert and eluded pursuit. Shortly, another shout went up and a second rabbit jumped. The hawk was down!

We were told to stay back. It was in tall brush and we couldn't see much. After the hawk was allowed his prey a bit, one of the falconers brought out the rabbit, with the hawk attached! The rabbit and hawk were placed in the open and everyone was allowed good looks and photos of the hawk.

We wondered how a falconer could take the prey from the hawk, but we were shown that if the bird was offered a treat it liked, (in this case, two dead chicks fastened to a lure;) the hawk would give up the rabbit and take the lure.

The second hawk, a younger, less-experienced hawk was taken out to hunt next. A rabbit was gotten up and was pursued, but not caught. It was past lunch time and we were all taken back to the Old Timers building and treated to a nice lunch prepared by the ladies of the falconers and Holloway. At the building we were able to see some other hawks on their perches: a Red-tailed Hawk, two goshawks and the larger, female Harris Hawks. The falconry was an enlightening, unusual experience.



*Mick Brown with a Harris Hawk –
photo by Rosie Campbell*



PURPLE GALLINULE AT GREEN BOTTOM

Wow! The universe bestowed a feathered gift on my birthday.

I arrived at the Hoeft wetlands at Green Bottom WMA a little after 10 am after birding earlier in Wayne county (Camp Branch). I headed back to the second pond. About halfway or a little way down beside the second pond, I saw a bird jump from the water in the seasonal wetlands, into a shrub. My jaw dropped. I knew it was a Purple Gallinule the minute I saw it--beautiful peacock colored plumage on the wings, bright red and yellow beak, light patch above the beak and bright yellow legs (and very big feet!).

I called Gary Rankin because Dave Patick and Mike Griffith are both out of town. As luck would have it, Gary was at the Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam. He drove down straight way. As I waited for Gary, the bird was making a soft clucking sound. Right before Gary arrived, the bird flew about 20 feet south of where I was sitting.

Gary spotted the bird right away, perched in some small trees in the seasonal wetlands. I observed it in the small tree while he went to the other side for a better look. It was in shadow from where we were looking, so he took his scope and walked around the seasonal wetlands to the other side where he could get excellent looks. He confirmed it. I observed the bird about 45 minutes in all.

Previously, I have stalked and seen this species before in the Florida Everglades. The last West Virginia sighting was "collected" at McClintic Wildlife Management Area in 1983.

I am one happy birder and very grateful that Gary Rankin was close by to confirm this sighting!
— Janet Keating



*Purple Gallinule at Green Bottom WMA
— photo by Josh Holland*

POETRY BOOK BY LATE WV BIRDER RELEASED

My late husband, Jeff Del Col, derived so much pleasure from his interactions with the birding group, and as you may recall, he was an avid birder.

Jeff was also a poet, and several months before his death, he had begun putting together a collection of his poems. He had not yet completed that project before he died, but I was able to finish it and seek publication.

The book was published in April. Since many of his poems are about the birds he encountered in West Virginia, it recently occurred to me that some of the members of the WV birding group might enjoy those poems. Here is the link to it on Amazon.com if you would like to read more about it:

https://www.amazon.com/Then-Now-Jeffrey-Del-Col/dp/1986666700/ref=sr_1_19?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1522845156&sr=1-19&keywords=Then%2C+Now

I would like to share Jeff's poetry with as many of his friends and former colleagues and students as I can. Thanks so much.

Regards, Carol Del Col

OUR YEARLY TRIP TO MAGEE MARSH - *contributed by Bob Rine*

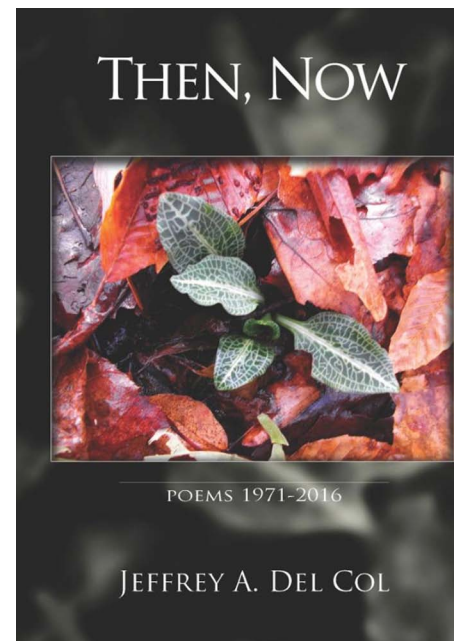
My daughter Susan and I made our annual visit to Magee Marsh, the 7-acre wetland with a boardwalk on the west end of Lake Erie, "the warbler hot spot of the world in May." It sure is. We got there about 2:30 on Thursday May 3 and didn't get more than 50 feet onto the boardwalk where we stayed for two hours surrounded by a flurry of activity--34 species, 12 warblers, including the Blackburnian with that flaming orange throat. A spectacular bird. There were so many yellow-rumped that after a while they almost became a distraction, as you were looking or something new.

Friday brought 25-mile-an-hour winds, which we thought might hamper the birding, but they seemed to keep the birds low and we got more species and another 11 warblers. At Metzger Marsh we got prairie and Wilson's warblers, life birds for both of us. The Wilson's, and then a pair of black-throated greens, came so close, and below eye level, that I could almost touch them. Amazing.

Another warbler on Saturday, the prothonotary, and more new species. Nothing new on Sunday, but lots of action--parula warbler, summer tanager, prothonotary building a nest, redstarts, several pairs of rose-breasted grosbeaks, Baltimore orioles, sandhill cranes flying overhead.

The bald eagle nests were occupied and we got adults and immatures sitting and on the wing. Altogether 89 species and 24 warblers. Another terrific weekend of birding, which is par for the course at Magee.

License plates seen in the parking lot--California, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Quebec, Ontario.



INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

Judy got a snow day today and here's a sample of the birds we have seen:

American Kestrel perched on a power line with a mouse; Female Hairy Woodpecker at the feeder; 16 bald Eagles at the mouth of the Bluestone River. One caught a fish and was immediately chased by six others for several minutes; 27 Common Ravens interacting in flight; Two chickadees fussing at the screech owl that was sunning in the opening of one of our nest boxes in the apple tree in the yard; Nine male and three female Eastern Bluebirds feeding in sumacs along our driveway with full sun on them and 3-4 " of fresh snow on the ground; and Fox Sparrow and male Towhee under the feeder.

Hard to decide the best sighting but we are leaning toward the bluebirds.

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 2/2/18

Gary Rankin and I made a trip this evening to Spring Hill Cemetery in Charleston, WV. for our second attempt to see the Merlin. We met Dr. Joe and Susan Jarrell and Jim Waggy at the Cemetery. We were not disappointed this time and saw the Merlin upon a few minutes of our arrival behind the office perched up the hill.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV, 2/18/18

Yesterday, Chuck, Wade and I went birding, and were fortunate enough to be able to stay out as the snow passed through our area. The snow was wet and melted on the roads as it fell, but it was enough to have birds drop out of the sky to quickly take refuge. While along the Shenandoah River, we observed a number of different flocks of Cedar Waxwings, and the sheer numbers were impressive. We estimated that we saw a conservative 1,200 of them along the full stretch of the river between Millville and Route 115. This was a record number of Cedar Waxwings for all of us, and it is hard for me to describe the magnitude and beauty of what we experienced. Even photos and video do not convey the excitement of seeing these gorgeous birds in large numbers.

We also had 51 Yellow-rumped Warblers in a few trees, and were excited to have at least 4 Eastern Phoebe that just appeared out of nowhere from the snow filled sky. They were in close proximity to each other in a tree and singing "Fee-be Fee-be" and another song phrase that I had never heard before.

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 2/18/18

I topped Cheat Mountain this morning (2/20/18) headed East and just past the USFS 92/Fish for Fun Intersection there were 3 Red Crossbills picking grit on the edge of the road. I went down the road & turned around. Parked at the intersection and attempted to get photos while fighting the steady stream of traffic. I finally got a poor photo of two on the third attempt of them flying away from vehicles. There were 2 males and a female. I only could get within about 50 yards of them and they gave up and flew to the East.

I was happy just getting a bad photo and traveled onward. About a quarter mile down the road there was a bunch of dead birds in the road. I went down a turned around. I figured at least I could get some bill close-ups. There were 6 Red Crossbills dead in the road. I found one male on the edge of the road that was warm and found another female that was upside down and moving. The ones that were in the road were COLD. They were apparently run over yesterday evening. I didn't think the live one was going to make it but I carried it around for probably 15 minutes and could feel it's grip on my fingers getting stronger. I even took it for a short ride down the road. After about 20 minutes it flew off and seemed quite fine! I bet not many people have a photo of a Red Crossbill sitting on their camera bag!

Addendum: I found another freshly dead Red Crossbill in the road on Cheat Mountain today (3/13/18) near the Stonecoal Run Intersection on 250. I did manage to find 3 live ones, also: at Gaudineer Day Use Area, 2 males & a female type.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 2/20/18

On April 29, 2017, I reported 4 juvenile Common Ravens on the ground along the Decker's Creek Trail in downtown Morgantown less than a block from a nest on the underside of the Pleasant Street bridge.

This afternoon I saw 2 nests on the underside of that bridge. The one I saw last year on the Morgantown High School end of the bridge had a bird apparently incubating. I saw the head; later the bird stood up and looked like it might be turning eggs.

I also saw another nest on the underside of the bridge on the trail side of the creek above the end of the dog park. This nest had lots and lots of white excrement on and near it. The angle of view is almost directly straight up so that one can not see into the nest, but I did see a bird fly over my head flying toward that nest as I walked along the trail so I think it's safe to assume it is also occupied. Perhaps the birds are offspring of last year's successful nesting in the other nest.

– Terry Bronson, Morgantown, WV, 3/10/18



Charleston Merlin –
photo by David Patick



Golden Eagle at Camp Creek State Forest
– Photo from Frank Ratcliffe

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

I was happy to see (after hearing) a pair of ravens flying over the parking lot at the Canaan State Park Lodge yesterday afternoon. And happy to see a Red-tail fly 30 feet over my car in Buchanan, on my way home to Charleston. Oh my, why is a hawk carrying a long rope. Oh my my, it's not a rope, but a snake. A fairly big snake, maybe 3-4 feet. Poor thing probably just found a good sunny spot after this cold weather and snow, and dag-gone it, the hawk ruined it's day. Gotta love nature, even through a car window.

– Laura Ceperley, Charleston, WV, 3/19/18

Amy and I decided to go out birding today instead of sitting around the house doing nothing, and it's a good thing that we did. Our first stop was at the Beech Fork Marina. From the parking lot we could see a group of ducks out in the middle of the lake, although they were closer to the mouth of Stowers Branch, which is where the swimming area is. As I was getting the scope set up, a gull flew over me, and I realized it was a Bonaparte's Gull and there were actually three of the them.

I got the scope on the ducks, but could only recognize the Greater Scaup. Amy looked and she thought some of them looked like scoters. We took the scope around the right side of the lake so we could be closer, and looked at the ducks again. I'll admit that Amy and I had only every seen White-winged scoters before, and she was pretty sure that these were surf scoters, so the closest person that I could think of that would know was Gary Rankin, and he was good enough to come and check them out.

When he got there he said he had been there earlier in the day and had seen the Bonaparte's Gulls. He identified the surfscoters for us and as an added bonus, he was able to identify a Black Scoter also. (After we had left, David Patick called and said he was there with Gary Rankin and Mike Griffith, and that they were also able to identify two Black Scoters.) So that makes two life birds for Amy and myself.

– Amy and Rennie Talbert, Barboursville, WV, 4/1/18

Bird of note: American Goldfinch, (20). I know, I know, goldfinches shouldn't be a "bird of note"-but one was all creamy white. The eyes appeared to be normal color so it was leucistic, not albino.

– Rick Gregg, Kanawha Col, WV, 4/9/18

Okay, so I'm a slow learner. I decided to go on our morning walk up the mountain without my binoculars. After all it was cold, blowing and snowing. A little voice kept chiding me, but I didn't listen. I could easily tell the American Robins in the bare patches of gravel. Then Sarah spotted a little bird flitting around in a tree. Fortunately, by its shape, color, markings and behavior, I could tell it was our first-of-the-year Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. That wasn't so hard.

However on our way down we spotted a bird on the road with the robins that was smaller but larger than the Dark-eyed Juncos that were also in the road. As we crept closer, my mind kept thinking thrush. It flew into the brush and still looked "thrushy" but I couldn't pin it down. Now I really felt "nude" without my bins.

As we finished our walk, I decided to "punish" myself and go back up the mountain with my binoculars. On the way back up I had good looks at Blue-headed Vireos feeding in the trees along with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

I doubt there were many insects out. On the way back down I heard a sapsucker like call. However, it was too fast and short. It turned out to be a courting pair of White-

breasted Nuthatches. She would flutter her wings like a baby bird and call. Then he would feed her something. Cute.

Shortly after the courting behavior, a bird flew off the path up into the shrubs with a robin. I could only see its back and thought maybe a female Eastern Towhee since they were calling along the walk. However its tail was reddish. It would lift it slowly and drop it. It was my first-of-the-year Hermit Thrush. When it turned, I could see its spotted breast.

I felt somewhat vindicated but have I learned my lesson? The next spring snow storm will tell.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 4/17/18

– **Sightings taken from
WVBird ListServ**

OSPREYS RETURN TO STONEWALL JACKSON LAKE IN FORCE

The first reported pair of Osprey in eBird this year at Stonewall Jackson Lake was at the Pen Run access, as reported by Davette Saeler on March 18. Well, today there were 5 occupied nests, as follows:

- Skin Creek Road at Curtis Run Road—2 birds on nest
- Pen Run access—2 birds on nest, copulating
- Oil Creek Road near Roanoke School entrance—2 birds on nest
- Mud Lick Road just south of Route 19—1 bird on nest on the man-made platform atop a telephone pole
- Route 19 northwest of Dunkin Run Road—1 bird on nest.

The latter 2 locations were previously unknown to me, though the Dunkin Road location was reported to eBird in 2016. In addition, a flying bird was seen at the Hog Hollow Road bridge, heading toward Pen Run, so I presume it was one of that pair. No birds were present at the Skin Creek Road nest south of Little Skin Creek Road.

– Terry Bronson, 3/26/18



*Creamy-white American Goldfinch –
photo by Richard Gregg*

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CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

May-August 2018 – 6 AM -Noon. MAPS bird banding at Sandstone Falls (Raleigh Co.) and Wolf Creek (Fayette Co.), Day use area beyond the Sandstone Falls Parking Lot. New River Bird Observatory near Oak Hill, WV. Contact Allen and Mindy Waldron at mwal-dron@suddenlink.net.

May-September 2018 – Second and fourth Saturdays at 9 AM. Join the birding group at the Grandview NPS for a morning of birding. Grandview Visitors and Picnic area. Meet near the Visitors Center. Contact Mindy Waldron.

July 2018 – Date and time to be determined. Blueberries and Birds at Blueberry Hill. Always a great time. Can't beat berries, birds and friends. Blueberry Hill near Flat Top, WV. Contact Mindy Waldron.

August 25, 2018 – Trip to Bluestone WMA (Bertha Campground) for birds, plants, butterflies and all things natural. This trip is so amazing with the number of plants, dragonflies, eagles, and butterflies. We'll meet at Bellepoint Park in Hinton at 8:00 AM. Bring a lunch. Bluestone WMA is located along the New River. Contact Mindy Waldron.

September 2018 – Date to be determined. Hawk Watch on East River Mountain, 10-3 PM. East River Mountain in Mercer County near Bluefield WV. Contact Jim Phillips at jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

Saturday June 30, 2018 – Picnic/outing, hosted by Suzanne Quinn. 44 Easy Dr., Dallas, WV 26036. PLEASE NOTE: You can not get to the farm from the WV side, you MUST enter from the PA side. If needed use this address for car GPS units 106 Dague Ln, West Finley, PA 15377. Bring a covered dish, drink and lawn chairs. Meet at 2:00 pm.

Saturday July 21, 2018 – Outing for Grassland Birds. Meet at the Cadiz Animal Clinic in Ohio at 8:00a.m. Upland

Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Henslow Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows are some of our target birds.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

June Coordinator – Jon Benedetti
304-295-8945

June 21, 2018 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am, McDonough parking lot.

June 28, 2018 – North Bend State Park, 8:00am, Kroger, 7th St. Parkersburg. Bring lunch.

August Coordinator – Dick Esker
304-863-8765

Aug. 9, 2018 – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, Northwest Drive.

Aug. 25, 2018 – Annual Picnic, 5:00pm, McDonough Log Shelter “A”. Bring covered dish, drink & service.

September Coordinator – Jeanie Hilton 304-428-8641

Sept. 6, 2018 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am. McDonough parking lot.

Sept. 8, 2018 – SATURDAY - Mountwood Park, 8:00 am. Beach area (near torpedo), bring lunch.

Sept. 13, 2018 – Lake Hope, Zaleski forest, Ohio, 8:00am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7. Bring lunch.

Sept. 20, 2018 – Ohio River Islands NWR, 8:00am, ORINWR Parking Lot.

Sept. 27, 2018 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am, McDonough parking lot.



NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, 2018 – ‘Third Wednesday’ Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve, 1469 Lloyd Road, Charles Town, WV, 7:30 am. Join Beth Poole on her regularly scheduled ‘Third Wednesday’ bird walk at Cool Spring Preserve. The trails at Cool Spring preserve have a lot to offer! From well maintained foot paths to gorgeous views, the preserve’s 12 acres is home to much wildlife.

Please meet by 7:30 am in the front parking lot of Cool Spring Preserve, the walk will last a couple of hours. Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills.

If you have questions or would like more information, contact Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or 703-303-1026.

July 14, 2018 – Mid-Summer Bird Walk, USGS Fish Health Lab property (407 Reservoir Rd, just off Leetown Rd), 7:30 AM. Trip Leaders are Lynne Wiseman & John Young.

Our expert birders are offering regular walks at the Fish Health Lab property and are excited with what it has to offer! The size is not excessively large, but the bird species are diverse and the quality of the wetland is excellent. The property has a mix of open ponds and woods; offering different species. The route is generally flat, with some gradual hills. This bird walk is open to the public and children are welcome to attend with an adult. Registration is strongly encouraged. Binoculars will be provided if needed.

The address for the USGS Leetown Science Center is 407 Reservoir Road, just off Leetown Road in Leetown. To search for it on Internet mapping sites, enter 407 Reservoir Road, Kearneysville, WV. Please contact Krista Hawley for more info.

Another summer walk at this location will take place on August 4, 2018.

More PVAS outings at www.potomacaudubon.org/birdcal.

CANAAN VALLEY NWR

June 23, 2018 – The breeding birds are here, and they’re busy! We’ll try to find a nest or two, and look and listen for our summer visitors as well as our residents as they raise their families. Meet local ornithophile Casey Rucker at 7 a.m. at the Visitors Center; binoculars are available.

July 7, 2018 – Join Herb Myers at the visitor center at 7 am. We will drive to the top of Forest Road 80 and walk along the ridge of Cabin Mountain looking for our feathered friends

July 14, 2018 – The birds have quieted down, many youngsters have left their nests, and some are beginning to molt their feathers. There’s still time to watch and listen to them before the migrants begin their travels, long or short. Join Casey Rucker at the Visitor Center at 7 a.m.; binoculars are available.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

June 16, 2018 – Birding and Bird Walk at Blackwater Falls - Learn the basics of bird watching with the Blackwater Falls state park naturalist. This popular activity will help you start your journey on a lifetime of fun. Program starts at 9 a.m. and will last about one hour and includes a one-mile walk. Call 304-259-5216 for more details.

June 23, 2018 – Wings of Wonder – Birds of Prey at Blackwater Falls - Get an up-close look at owls, hawks and eagles at this Birds of Prey Education Program, featuring live birds native to West Virginia! Learn more about habitats, diet and behavior of some of the Mountain State’s most recognized birds, as well as most common causes of injury to birds and the laws protecting our avian friends. Event is free and open to the public. Starts at 8 p.m. at Blackwater Falls Lodge Conference Center.

As always, www.wvstateparks.com/calendar/ lists many great programs and walks with nature in mind. Go to their website for more information on events, walks and programs at your favorite state park.



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We'll remember you, Stu

*– Stu Robbins lost a brief battle
with leukemia in early April.
More details on his rich life are
on page 5.*

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