



THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA
P.O. BOX 4077 • WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA 26003

VOL. 75, ISSUE 4

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2018 RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note

Every fall, many birders await Ron Pittaway's winter finch forecast. Ron is a Canadian birder, and his prognosis is based on the cone and seed crops in Canada and how it will affect the food stores of grosbeaks, redpolls, crossbills, siskins and more. This year has already been a good fall for Evening Grosbeaks, with a number of sightings across the "four corners" of the state of West Virginia. The further north you go, the more instances of these "black and gold" birds showing up. Keep an eye out at your feeders, and remember to let others know of your finds on eBird, WVBIRD LISTSERV and Facebook, if possible.

Christmas Bird Counts are an excellent opportunity to get out and try to find these winter finches, as well as owls, hawks, and the odd over-wintering warblers, of which there have been a few in the tri-state area. You can find lists of Christmas counts and coordinator information on page 2, and on www.brooksbirdclub.org.



Purple Finches, Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin, at the feeders and yard of BBC member Cynthia Burkhart this fall.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JANICE EMRICK

Do you ever get the Winter blues? Do you look back fondly on those days in Spring, Summer, and Fall and miss the lively songs and breathtaking beauty of the birds during those seasons? Well, there is a way to get over the blues: get involved in Winter birding!

Whether it is putting up backyard feeders and watching the birds that flock in to feed, especially on cold, blustery winter days; or attending a group outing to actively seek out birds in the winter, you can banish those blues! Coming up December 14-January 5 are various Christmas Bird Counts around your area. This is a great way to practice some Citizen Science and perk up your day! A list of CBCs can be found on our website, www.brooksbirdclub.org. You are sure to find at least one to help with, or maybe several.

Another birding opportunity that is helpful to science is The Great Backyard Bird Count held February 15-18, 2019. This was launched by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society in 1998 and became the first online citizen science project to collect near real time data on wild birds around the world. This count can be done in a backyard, but it can actually be done anywhere, for at least 15 minutes or as long as you wish. You can do counts all four days, in the same spot or in different spots. The Great Backyard Bird Count creates an annual snapshot of the abundance and distribution of birds worldwide.

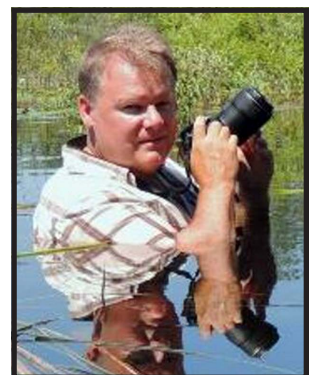
So bundle up and get outside, or stay warm inside, and enjoy the Winter birds and beat those blues!

— Janice Emrick, BBC President

JIM McCORMAC TO SPEAK AT SPRING MEETING

Early March might be leafless and colorless outside, but at the Brooks Bird Club Early Spring Meeting, Jim McCormac will be showing us many of his photos, full of depth and color.

Jim worked for the Ohio Division of Natural Resources for 31 years before retiring to follow his passion for nature photography and education. Make sure to sign up for the weekend early, as we nearly filled the lodge last March.



2018-2019 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

We are aware that this printing includes dates that have passed, but wanted to include them for the historical record. - Ed.

Athens/Princeton

Tuesday, December 26, 2018
Ron Canterbury - 513-556-9570
roncanterbury@aol.com (best)

Buffalo Creek - Washington Co., PA/ Ohio & Brooke Co., WV

Sunday, December 16, 2018
Larry Helgerman - 412-508-0321

Canaan/Tucker Co.

Sunday, December 16, 2018
Casey Rucker - 304-866-4004
autoblock@frontiernet.net

Charles Town

Saturday, December 15, 2018
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com

Charleston

Saturday, December 15, 2018
Doren Burrell - 304-553-8592
g.immer@doren.net

Elkins Area

Wednesday, January 2, 2019
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Franklin/Pendleton County

Tuesday, December 18, 2018
Fred Atwood - 703-242-1675
fredatwood@yahoo.com

Hampshire County

Saturday, December 29, 2018
Vini Schoene - bcws2@earthlink.net

Huntington

Saturday, December 29, 2018
David Patick - 304-633-4450

Inwood

Saturday, January 5, 2019
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com

Lewisburg

Sunday, December 16, 2018
Larry Davis

Benjamin Handley
304-646-0602
ben@potteryvalley.com

McDowell County

Saturday, December 22, 2018
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Moorefield

Thursday, December 27, 2018
Jane Whitaker - 202-966-6218
Kathy King - 304-538-7121

Morgantown

Saturday, December 15, 2018
LeJay Graffious - 304-379-7505
lejaygraffious@gmail.com

Oak Hill

Sunday, December 30, 2018
Hilary Jones
Geoff Heater - 304-573-0111
geoffheeter@gmail.com

Ona

Sunday, December 16, 2018
David Patick

304-633-4450

Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 29, 2018
Jeanette Esker
304-863-8765

Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 15, 2018
Jim Phillips - 304-466-1275
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

Pocahontas County

Saturday, December 15, 2018
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Raleigh County

Sunday, December 16, 2018
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247

Wheeling

Saturday, December 22, 2018
Mike Hensley
304-261-5687
mhensley@oionline.com

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:

Ryan Tomazin
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 BBC EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT

The BBC's annual trip to the Eastern Shore this year was ably led by Cindy Slater. About two dozen avid birders attended.

After arriving about sunset Wednesday evening and a night's rest, we had a good breakfast the the small cafe across the parking lot from the hotel. A kingfisher and a few night herons were seen when we stepped out to sample the weather. (mild, but windy.) Carpooling, we drove along the waterfront, stopping where ever we could reach the beach or causeway. Though the temperatures were mild, there was a keen wind across the water, making it feel colder than it actually was.

Along the piers, we saw a large flock of Whimbrels, with a few Marbled Godwits and terns among them. They crowded close together on the boardwalks. There were assorted gulls on the walks and perched on top of posts. The usual flocks of small shore birds were scarce, maybe because of the stong winds. But we saw a Red-throated Loon, Great Blue Heron, a few Ruddy Turnstones, and distant oystercatchers.

Obviously, there hadn't been hard frosts yet, as we saw many garden flowers and shrub roses still in bloom, along with seaside goldenrod and groundsel trees. (These large, shrub-type groundsel trees appeared to be in bloom, but were actully shedding their fluffy white seeds.) We saw several flocks of Brant, both on the water and flying, as well as Northern Harriers hovering over the thick stands of reeds.

At our first stop at the Assateague, we found a ruby-crowned kinglet. Venturing further into the reserve, there were egrets, a Horned Grebe, Red-bellied Woodpecker, a few ducks, Black Vultures and of course, the ponies.

After eating our box lunches, we observed several egrets (Great and Snowy), yellow-rumps, and Red-breasted Nuthatches. Some of the egrets perched close enough for good photos. Driving on, we added Mallard, Gadwall, Green-wing Teal, Ruddy Ducks, a Red-shouldered Hawk and Tri-colored Heron to our lists. After

our well-earned dinners, we returned to the hotel to rest up for tomorrow.

Friday after breakfast, we found several immature Black-crowned Night Herons in the bushes across the water behind the hotel. It began to sprinkle rain as we observed them. One obliging adult heron appeared briefly.

Our first stop was in an extremely windy place where we found a good-sized group of Fish Crows sheltering in a thick evergreen. Beach stops brought us few shorebirds, possible because of the wind. A stop at a pond in Ocean City brought us shovelers, coots, Mute Sswans, and a Great Blue Heron.

On the Ocean City pier near the amusement rides, we ate our lunches while we watched a couple of Dunlin scrambling about the rocks. The parking lot dotted with various gulls and pigeons, some of which were experienced panhandlers. Facing the fierce wind, Scott walked out further on the sand spit and found a long line of birds; gulls, terns and Black Skimmers! The skimmers were life birds for some of our group.



Skimmers in the wind



Willits, terns and a Marbled Godwit

We stayed there a while observing and taking photos of the skimmers.

Our next stop brought us a Cooper's Hawk, cormorants, a loon, Laughing Gulls, Carolina Chickadees, a Downy Woodpecker and a Golden-crowned Kinglet. At the stop by the big bridge, the terns put on quite a show, flying skillfully in the strong wind, dipping in the high waves.

Friday evening we reached our hotel in Rehobeth Beach, had supper and retired for the day.

Saturday morning was milder than we'd expected temperature wise, but still very windy. A walk out to Gordon's Pond got us scoters, a gannet, Bald Eagle, and white pelicans. A stop inside the Prime Hook visitor's center gave us good looks at captive horseshoe crabs and sting rays. At the bird feeders, we added several common birds, House Finches, titmice, Chipping Sparrows and both Red-breasted and Brown-headed Nuthatches. Two



Male and female Surf Scoters

sitka deer grazed in a field as we proceeded on to the annual fund raiser sale. Several of us purchased books, t-shirts, baked items and Christmas decorations.

At the Prime Hook observation deck, we found a large flock of beautiful avocets, some Marbled Godwits and a few ducks. An eagle flew over and the avocets flew up in a white cloud, only to settle again nearby.

Our last stop was at Shearers Pond where we hoped to see the Snow Geese. We'd seen only four fly over but not the big flocks we hoped see. There were Tundra Swans, several kinds of ducks, Dunlin, herons and a lovely lavender and pink sunset, but no Snow Geese this time.

*See all photos in color online at
www.brooksbirdclub.org/the-mail-bag.html*

Continued on page 4

BROOKS BIRD CLUB 2018 FALL MEETING AT TYGART LAKE

The Fall 2018 BBC meeting was held at Tygart Lake State Park October 19-21. We arrived with cloudy weather but the forecast was ominous. A wet Saturday was predicted which is never the best birding and hiking weather. That was soon forgotten as we greeted friends at a delicious dinner and looked forward to hearing our speaker Jeffrey Hall. His topic was "Down the Shore". That's a New Jersey expression meaning going to the seacoast. A delightful evening of shorebird photography with some humor on the side was enjoyed by all.

In the morning most of the club went birding in the rain but eight went hiking. Jeffrey's "shore" expertise was put to the test Saturday morning when the birders found shore birds at the upper end of the lake. After much observing and discussion it was decided that the "waders" were Greater Yellow Legs not Lesser. The birding was good considering the rain and the club total for the weekend was 67.



*Intrepid hikers on the trails –
photo © Bill Beatty*

The hikers said they had fun on their 3 miles of hills and found a huge bear tooth fungus which they brought back to the lodge. The cooks graciously cooked it for dinner and those brave enough to try it said it was quite tasty.

I found the evening program on Saturday unique. Dr. Jesse Fallon told us about the Avian Rehabilitation Center at the Cheat Lake Animal Hospital. It has 24 hour emergency service and treats all sorts of animals. Dr. Fallon specializes in birds. We were privileged to see x-rays ranging from the neck of a Great Blue Heron-quite impressive with many cervical vertebrae - to the coracoid bone which is unique to birds and is necessary for them to fly. The presentation was like having our own "TV Vet" in person.

There was snow predicted for Saturday night but it didn't happen. The business meeting was well run and over early so we bid adieu and went our separate ways until our next rendezvous in the spring.

Contributed by Jane Whitaker



photo by Jeffrey Hall

EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT (cont.)

There was no banquet this year, and we had dinner on the way back to the hotel.

Sunday morning after breakfast our Jr. Fearless Leader Cindy took us through the bird list. Our final count was 116. Good-byes were said and we parted after breakfast for our various homes, having enjoyed another time of good fun and camaraderie with friends.



Brown-headed Nuthatch at Prime Hook

Coming back through the mountains, we saw a tiny bit of snow. Someone e-mailed that a flock of Snow Geese had settled on Cheat Lake for the night. It was a long drive home. We stopped in Hagerstown for lunch, then drove steadily on through the mountains, and down Rt. 7 to Wilma's. After bidding her good-bye, we came on to New Martinsville, crossed the bridge and up the hills to Malaga. It was dusk when I loaded my things into my truck and drove on home, driving carefully to avoid deer and Amish buggies on the way. I'd had a good time, but was weary and glad to be home.

*– Story and photos
by Rosie Campbell*



Scoping out the birds

HAPPY HOLIDAYS! – ENJOY INTERVIEWS WITH PAST GUEST, AND A FUNNY BIRD STORY



photo by Kyle Carlson

GREG MILLER INTERVIEW

What were your impressions of the Brooks Bird Club Foray? I was most surprised about the amount of diverse expertise of the group. What a great collection of knowledge!

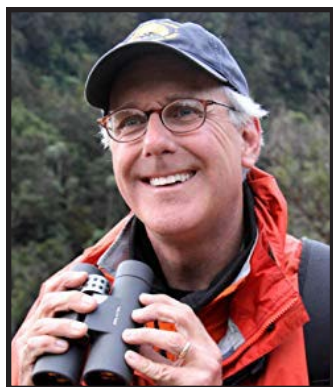
After trekking across the country, what were your impressions of Pocahontas County, WV? I was in a place only a few hours from home that was almost as high as Denver! The scenery was spectacular!

What places are on your birding dream list? First I think I need to live until I'm 180 so I can go to all the places I'd like to visit. The areas closest to the equator have the highest biodiversity—those places take top priority.

Of course I could return to Ecuador 30 times and never tire of richness of the experience!

With Evening Grosbeaks, redpolls and more streaming south, what was the best winter you had at your home feeders, and what made it special? I grew up in Ohio. The late 1960s had a nice influx of Evening Grosbeaks. When I moved to Oklahoma in the mid 1980s I put up a feeder and I had one day with 12 Harris's Sparrows under my feeder. Both of these experiences probably top my "wow" moments of watching feeders.

How many Christmas Bird Counts will you participate in this year? Probably just one, possibly two. My first Christmas Bird Count was here in Ohio in 1972.



BRUCE BEEHLER INTERVIEW

What were your impressions of the Brooks Bird Club Foray? This is one of the more remarkable events staged by a state bird club. I would recommend it to all my birding friends. The knowledge pooled in this event is something special. I learned a lot on the outings I participated in....not just about birds but also about trees and herps.

West Virginia is sort of the unofficial warbler state. Have you considered doing a mini warbler trek across WV during migration? Over the years

I have spent a good amount of time birding in West Virginia. It is a land of contrasts with some superb green spaces. I know a group from the National Museum of Natural History a few years back did a "Big Day" centered in West Virginia and it was a great success. I would suggest this would be a great state to carry out a "Warbler Big Day."

What is your next book or research project about? I have 2 books in proof at this moment. The first is Birds of Maryland, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, a heavily illustrated (color photos) coffee table book treating the birds of that Region. The other book is entitled Encounters with Nature and highlights 3.5 decades out in nature--focused on the DC area, but also including birding field trips to WV, New England, Ohio, and Florida. It's a bit of a guide to how to get more from spending time with the wonders of nature.

What is the most interesting bird you've seen at your birdfeeder? We get decent feeder birds but in general host a rather ho-hum avifauna in our back yard. Our three most memorable birds are Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, and Fox Sparrow.

How many Christmas Bird Counts do you participate in? Just one -- the Brooke, Virginia count, that is centered a bit east of Fredericksburg, VA. We get to do a piece of the Potomac River down where it is bay-like...highlight is typically Red-headed Woodpecker.

This is so funny. You might want to put this in the mailbag as it is bird related.

– Jane Whitaker

TRUE STORY - Chicken Test

The true story of the Chicken Gun. Sometimes it does take a rocket scientist!

Scientists at NASA built a gun specifically to launch standard four-pound dead chickens at the windshields of airliners, military jets and the space shuttle, all traveling at maximum velocity.

The idea is to simulate the frequent incidents of collisions with airborne fowl to test the strength of the windshields.

British engineers heard about the gun and were eager to test it on the windshields of their new high speed trains.

Arrangements were made, and a gun was sent to the British engineers.

When the gun was fired, the engineers stood shocked as the chicken hurled out of the barrel, crashed into the shatter-proof windshield, smashing it to smithereens. It blasted through the control console, snapped the engineer's backrest in two, and embedded itself in the back wall of the cabin, like an arrow shot from a bow.

The horrified Brits sent NASA the disastrous results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windshield and begged the U.S. scientists for suggestions.

NASA responded with a one-line memo: **"Defrost the chicken."**



George LaSalle - Chicken Cannon, St. Paul Shrine Circus, March 1952

REMEMBERING BEN STOUT

*Excerpt posted on August 31, 2018 in
The Highlands Voice By Cindy Rank*

Sad news as longtime friend, Conservancy supporter, activist and teacher Ben Stout died.

His enthusiasm for life and his love of our fresh water resources and all the critters who live in those streams invigorated and inspired all who knew him. His determination to share his knowledge and expertise in support of communities harmed by polluting industries was boundless. He gave unselfishly of his time, energy, knowledge and skills to protect the environment and the goodness of the world around us. He will be missed.

Ben was born and raised in West Virginia, and taught Biology and Stream Ecology at Wheeling Jesuit University for the past 26 years. His environmental research, scientific publications, and testimony are widely recognized.

Among the many awards he received he may have been most proud of his recent and very prestigious induction in the first class of Fellows of the Society of Freshwater Science in 2017, an honor given in recognition of outstanding contributions in the field of freshwater science.

Prior to working at Wheeling Jesuit, Ben taught at Southern West Virginia Community College in Williamson and Logan. He would later return to those communities to testify in Federal Court in our first mountaintop removal litigation on behalf of citizens arguing that valley fills stemming from mountaintop removal mining operations were a violation of the Clean Water Act.

Dr. Ben Stout's legacy lives on through his students, publications, and audiences throughout WV and Appalachia who valued his voice and continue his work.

Dr. Stout was a former Brooks Bird Club member from the Headquarters Chapter.

THE HOLIDAY WEEK- END IN GOTHAM

Contributed by Bob Rine

September 1-4, 2018

Did you know that author Washington Irving referred to New York City as Gotham in 1807, in his periodical which lampooned New York culture and politics? He had seen the name in an Irish folk tale. People liked the nickname and it stayed.

Saturday - Our flight to Newark landed at 9:40. Then a cab ride downtown to our hotel, the Park Central, near Central Park obviously. After we checked in, we took a walk in the park and came to a nice pond, where we saw a Great Blue Heron on the wing, a Double-crested Cormorant sitting on a log with several turtles, lots of ducks, including our best looks ever at the colorful Wood Duck, close up. A kingfisher, Canada and White-fronted Geese, many species of pigeon, including one all-white and hundreds of House Sparrows rounded out our sightings.

There are benches all along the paths and as we passed one who did we see sitting there but Tony Bennett, with a pretty young girl, probably his granddaughter. The old boy still looks pretty good. We didn't approach him, but I might have told him that I saw him and Lena Horne perform in Pittsburgh several years ago.

We then took a carriage ride through the park, pulled by Nicholas, a 12-year old bay horse. Susie fed him a carrot while I patted his nose. As Nicholas walked along, our driver identified the statues and other points of interest. Relaxing in the carriage and enjoying the sights of the 840-acre park was most pleasant.

By now we had an appetite, so we stopped at Rue 57, a nice white tablecloth place at 57th St. and Sixth Avenue. The house chardonnay, was tasty and so were my apple chicken sausages and Susie's beet salad. More strolling, then back to the hotel.

We started walking toward the theater district, where we would see "Frozen," and we saw the café Une, Deux, Trois. Their special was several kinds of

Continued on page 9

CORRESPONDENCE

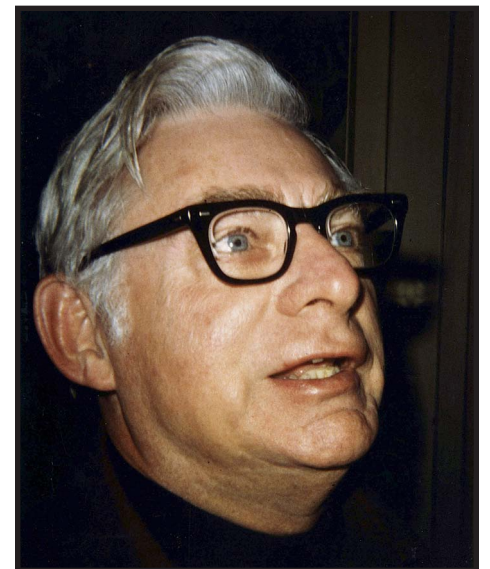
Have a good fall meeting.

I'll be 102 on October 12th. Have a beer with me. Poor eyesight now, but I can see the can!

300 to 500 hawks on nearby Hagerman Refuge. Every early November, Friends of Hagerman host a Hawk Fest. Good food.
– Karl "Mike" Haller, Sherman, TX

Ed. – Mike's letter, due to his eyesight, was written in very large script, so indulge me in this greeting!

**Mike H.,
Happy
102nd
Birthday,
and
CHEERS!
From your
BBC!**



NEWS AND NOTES FROM ROSIE CAMPBELL

The Wheeling group's September meeting was held at Barkcamp State Park. We had a good turn-out, pretty fall weather and some good birds-- green heron, cormorant, pileated woodpecker, and a gorgeous rainbow. As we were leaving for home, a sudden rain sent us all scurrying to our cars.

Oct. 6 – A few BBCers hosted the The Big Sit at Oglebay, a part of the Oglebay Fest. We watched from the balcony behind Schrader Center, overlooking part of the woods and raised boardwalk. We were in the center of things as we were able to hear the music and see the parade from our high perch. There were optics available for any aspiring bird watchers and several came by. Many common species were scarce or absent, perhaps because of all the other excitement. Rain during the afternoon slowed things down, but we had 21 species by the time we left. Remaining observers possibly saw more.



Janice Emrick at The Big Sit

added misery to the cold wind. We'd seen several kinds of hawks and 55 golden eagles. On the way home we had word the day's count was 66, tying the second place record for a day.

Oct. 19th was my lucky day! I've been trying for years to get a good photo of a bobcat. Walking to my deer stand at daybreak, I spotted one along the wood's edge. I managed three quick snaps of it before it bounded into the bushes.



Bobcat!



BBC at Barkcamp State Park

Oct. 14 – Five BBCers did a Big Sit at Bear Rocks Lake. From our vantage point on one of the dams, we saw several woodland birds, but amazingly, no water birds except a pair of kingfishers. During the morning, squirrel hunters were in the woods and there was some shooting. Afternoon was quieter. The woods were pretty and there were some interesting mushrooms and ferns.

Oct. 26 – A few BBCers drove to the Allegheny Front to watch for raptors. We wound through a pretty woods, the trees and plants some different than at home. The trees were smaller and sometimes wind-twisted. The ferns and mosses were lovely here. We saw signs that there were porcupines here, but didn't see one.

Once at the edge of the bluff, the hard east wind gave a whole new meaning to COLD! 38 degrees with 25 mph wind made us all glad of our heavy coats and wishing for more warm clothes.

The wind-shear along the edge of the bluff made the passing raptors seem to float on the rising air. Many eagles passed without a wing-beat. We left when rain

added misery to the cold wind. We'd seen several kinds of hawks and 55 golden eagles. On the way home we had word the day's count was 66, tying the second place record for a day.



Scanning for Golden Eagles in PA

LEJAY GRAFFIOUS FEATURED IN *THE HIGHLANDS VOICE*

In this year's September issue of the Highlands Conservancy newsletter, *The Highlands Voice*, longtime BBC member LeJay Graffious contributed four articles about various points on the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory (AFMO). To read the full article, go to <https://wvhighlands.org/current-issue/?issue=september2018>.

The Highlands Voice September, 2018 Page 10

Banding Birds for Over Six Decades

By LeJay Graffious

Each year, in late summer through early fall, volunteers gather near Red Creek campground on the Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, to help with banding efforts of migrating birds.

This year, 2018, has been designated by National Geographic and Audubon

one looks out across seven ridges. The observatory is directed by Joan Pattison and Todd Schnop.

Birders originally came to high elevation location to count hawks flapping and soaring overhead. Then they became aware of, first thrushes, and then warblers, in large numbers. The spot developed into the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory.

Welfare of the birds is primary. The nets, finely spun and called "mist nets," are suspended on metal poles in sections of the ridge area known to be passages for migrants. Nets are unfurled in pre-dawn hours and wound up each day at noon. Birds "bounce" into the nets, fall into the traps of netting, and are quickly extricated. At the hut, banders complete the data for each bird and use special pliers to carefully place

for our feline friends and one contribute to the estimated 4 killed annually in North America.

In addition to migration also provides a window into work. With technology taking in birding, a researcher can with recording equipment enclosures. Since birds migrate they use a series of chip readers to communicate. He recorded these notes and developed a program to listen to the night skies and record the number of each species passing overhead. Other studies have occurred at AFMO including birds as vectors of Lyme disease. Birds do not get Lyme, but they carry ticks which move the virus around the country.

Of course, all banding data is reported to the USGS Banding Lab in Laurel, MD. AFMO data, along with the other reports from around North America, give a big picture of environmental health through bird populations. Some reports say

The Highlands Voice

More About Bird Banding (Continued from previous page)

have 9 banders cycling through the season from August 18 to October 6. Ten trained net tenders and a few more in training assist throughout the migration.

These include WVHC members such as LeJay Graffious, Jackie Burns, Bander Leon W. always ask child visitors do you think you're a hummingbird or a ping? I first visited the 1976 when Elizabeth took me to the station. At first I was attracted to the variety of species that could be seen up close and personal. There have been 127 species recorded at AFMO; the only confirmed record in WV of a Kittlitz's Warbler is from there.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

We take our household trash to the Mercer County Landfill between Princeton and Bluefield and have done an e-Bird list each time for the last 4 years. Usually, we go late morning or early afternoon. Today, we went later in the day, just before they closed and were surprised to find record numbers for the vultures and ravens. Black Vulture (42) - 4-year high count; Turkey Vulture (105) - 4-year high count; American Crow (50); Common Raven (30) - 4-year high count; European Starling (220); and American Goldfinch (1).

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 7/31/18

This morning I went on Casey Rucker's summer bird walk at the refuge in Canaan Valley. There were over 100 Canada Geese accumulating in the field across from the boardwalk. As we walked down the boardwalk, a flock of Canada Geese flew toward us from the Timberline area heading toward the field. Casey exclaimed, "There is a white one - possibly an albino." As they passed by us, it was clear that the white one was much larger than the Canada Geese. It appeared to be a swan. Before long the swan had turned around and was headed back toward Timberline. We were pretty certain that it was a Mute Swan as a Trumpeter Swan would be much more unlikely in this area.

When I arrived at the refuge visitor center to open up, the phone was ringing. Some of the people on our walk were staying in Timberline. On their way back, they spotted "a large, white bird" on Spruce Island Lake. I hurried over with my binoculars and camera. I confirmed it was a Mute Swan and got some photos. Fun!

Back on the boardwalk, we had an encounter with a small, lanky, furry mammal. It was likely a young weasel. For a few minutes, it ran around us quite closely and frolicked as if it wanted to play. It clearly had not developed much fear of humans. It was very active and didn't pause long for photos.

It was a good, fun morning with a nice number and variety of birds for August - certainly not the doldrums.

– Herb Myers, Harman, WV, 8/4/18

We came upon a single Pine Siskin today, very near the top of Spruce Knob. It perched on the top of a spruce tree near the road and kept looking around like it was looking for its buddies, then flew off.

– Jon & BJ Little, Winchester, VA, 8/6/18

I found a Sora today at Glade Run on Cheat Mountain. I had just put my camera bag on the ground and was in the process of taking my backpack off to get a drink of water and heard the pitter-patter of Sora feet in the water. I knew what it was before I even turned around. It flew low right upstream for about 20 yards and landed. Of course, I spent the next 30 minutes trying to re-locate it with camera in hand. Nope, it doesn't work. I've tried before with 2 people and 2 dogs that watched one land with no success.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 9/5/18

This morning while walking the gravel road at Snake Hill WMA I was surprised to find a Dickcissel among a group of Field and Song Sparrows. It was fairly close to the entrance in the shrubby/grassland area along the road. It offered some great looks as it perched in the small trees and shrubs.

Otherwise it was pretty slow, but I did have a Hooded Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Red-breasted Nuthatch.

– Gordon Dimmig, Morgantown, WV, 9/12/18

It was wonderful to get back to beautiful WV for the first time since July. Despite the gloomy sky and periodic drizzle, I had a ton of fun finding 101 species this weekend (including 11 state-year-birds, and 2 state lifers), visiting Kimsey Run Lake, Parker Hollow Lake, Belle Babb Lake, Thorn Run Lake, Mt Storm Lake, New Creek Lake, Stony River Dam Lake, Hogueland Rd, my cabin in Cabins, South Mill Creek Lake, Oak Flat, Little Fork Lake, and the area near Petersburg around the airport, industrial park, and Johnson Run Rd to the Mennonite Church. Some exciting finds included: Wood Ducks (total of 97 all weekend); 5 Blue-winged and 2 Green-winged Teal in same location; 1 Sandhill Crane; Killdeer (total of 107 all weekend); 1 Upland Sandpiper (a state LIFER); 6 Least, 4 White-rumped (state LIFER), 2 Semipalmated, 12 Pectoral Sandpipers; 2 Dowitcher sp (I am leaning towards short-billed); 6 Spotted Sandpipers; 4 Greater and 7 Lesser Yellowlegs; 3 Ospreys; 1 Northern Harrier; 13 Bald Eagles; 7 Broad-winged Hawks; 4 Eastern Screech-owls; 2 Barred Owls; 7 American Kestrels; 1 Peregrine Falcon; 3 Yellow-throated Vireos; 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches; 2 House Wrens; 1 Marsh Wren; flight calls of Swainson's and Gray-cheeked thrushes over my cabin; 1 Bobolink; 13 species of warbler: Ovenbird, Black-and-white,



Blue Grosbeak at Kimsey Run Lake – photo by Jim Triplett



White-winged Dove at Gallipolis Ferry – photo by David Patick

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)



First cycle Laughing Gull Harris Riverfront Park – photo by David Patick

Tennessee, Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Cape May, Redstart, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Pine, Black-throated Green and Canada; and 1 Blue Grosbeak.

– Fred Atwood, Cabins, WV, 9/16/18

I have never seen a Flock of Flickers until yesterday (9/26/18). I rode through Rose Hill Cemetery near Thomas at 11am. There were at least 40 flickers there on the lower end of the cemetery. ALL were within a ten yard circle.

– Randy Bodkins, Norton, WV, 9/27/18

While sitting in the living room I heard a “thud” on the front porch about 30 mins. ago. What a surprise to see a Gray-Cheeked Thrush sitting on the railing! No doubt about it. It flew into a nearby honeysuckle bush and stayed there until just now when it flew away. I thought that was great but while it was there in flew a Swainson’s Thrush! So different with distinct eye ring not seen on the Gray-Cheeked. Walked away and came back to see a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Great way to start the morning!

– Lynne Wiseman, Harpers Ferry, WV, 10/7/18

Yesterday (October 6th) Kyle Aldinger and I teamed up and completed a Preston County big day for eBird’s first fall Global Big Day. We birded nonstop from 5:15 AM to 7:45 PM.

Though pretty tired by the end of the day we had a great time and ended the day with 75 species. Many highlights on the day. First and last birds of the day were Swainson’s Thrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Our biggest misses include Rock Pigeon, Wild Turkey, House Wren, Lincoln’s Sparrow, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper’s Hawk, and Black-throated Green Warbler.

– Steven Wilson, Beckley, WV, 10/7/18

I stopped by Kimsey Run Dam this afternoon after work, and was surprised to find a female-type Surf Scoter hanging out with some other waterfowl on the south end of the lake. It had the characteristic



Little Blue Heron at Marmet Locks – photo by Rick Gregg

head pattern, and didn’t flash any white when it raised its wings. Other good sightings included: Mute Swan, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall (7), Ruddy Duck (5), Tree Swallow (105), Red-winged Blackbird (1310 - conservative estimate).

– Darrell Good, Baker, WV, 10/16/18

This morning I watched a Blackpoll Warbler foraging in trees along the riverside (Shenandoah) on Virginian Island. He was attractive in his fall garb, with crisp white wing bars and dark streaking on his back, and those neat orange legs.

Yesterday a FOS Winter Wren watched me run by at North Schoolhouse Ridge battlefield.

– Deb Hale, Harpers Ferry, WV, 10/25/18



Merlin at Shepherd University – photo by Elliot Kirschbaum

– **Sightings taken from WVBird ListServ**

HOLIDAY WEEKEND IN GOTHAM (cont.)

crepes, with a free glass of wine with each order. My Epinard crepe of mushrooms, goat cheese and spinach was delicious and Susie’s Canada crepe of salmon, capers and onion dill sauce she said was better than the crepes she had in Paris.

“Frozen” was a Disney movie and I must say that the stage production takes Disney to a new level. Whether you call it a fantasy musical or a musical fantasy, spectacular and awesome are fitting words. The many changes of scenery, the brilliant special effects, and the 23 musical numbers brought many bursts of applause and a prolonged standing ovation at the end.

Sunday - The plan for the day was to walk down to Chinatown for some dim sum, that’s like a Chinese smorgasbord, then see the musical “Chicago” at 3 p.m. We had a nice cab ride down Park Avenue and Broadway to Canal Street in lower Manhattan, where Chinatown and Little Italy kind of mix. A myriad of open air shops selling all kinds of merchandise, including produce (some vegetables I’d never seen before).

We took a cab to the theater. The Washington Post called “Chicago” “one of the most remarkable shows in musical history.” Terrific show.

Monday - Got up early to go birding in The Ramble in Central Park. It’s a 38-acre wooded area with ponds and small waterfalls. We thought we might get some early fall migrants, including warblers, but no luck. Hundreds more House Sparrows and a few of the usuals, but that was it.

Susie had picked out Lillie’s for dinner. Long narrow room, long bar, classic paintings on the walls, a white marble fireplace in the back with a stained glass fresco above it. We sat down in a red velvet banquette and surveyed the place. The food was quite good.

Tuesday - After our morning coffee and tea, we walked down to the New York Public Library, another massive building, like the Met, about two city blocks. Lots of marble, “brilliant architecture,” elaborate ceilings, three floors, many rooms, 43 million books. Another unique spot in Gotham. After lunch, we rode to the airport and were soon away for home.

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

Aretha & Thomas Kees
2360 Miller Ave.
Fairmont, WV 26554
Tel: 304-363-4782
Email: beesnbooks70@comcast.net

Kristen King
2043 Miller Rd.
Huntington, WV 25701
Tel: 304-521-9895
Email: kriskingmillen@gmail.com

Beverly Spurlock
6676 Merritts Creek Rd.
Huntington, WV 25702
Tel: 304-736-2238
Email: bevsbees@frontier.com

CHANGE OF ADDRESSES

Terry Bronson
608 5th Street
Marietta, Ohio 45750
(no change to email & phone)

Matt Fox & Family
4326 Chelsea Harbor Dr. West
Jacksonville, Fl. 32224

Seth Halman & Sarah Walker
PO Box 1112
Dubois, WY 82513
307-455-3161

RENEWING MEMBERSHIP

Margaret Straley
17 Old Golf Course Rd.
Spencer, WV 25276
Tel: 304-927-5690
Email: msstraley@suddenlink.net

CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

Contact Mindy for information at mwaldron@suddenlink.net

January 12, 2019 – Eagle survey. Jim Phillips is coordinating both eagle surveys. We count eagles along the New, Greenbrier, and Bluestone Rivers from 10-2 pm. Then we gather to tally what we have seen. All are welcome.

February, 2019 – TBD. We will try for a trip to Burke's Garden in Virginia. When we go will be weather dependent. Burke's Garden is a natural bowl area with high elevation species in the winter.

March 2, 2019 – Second eagle survey.

HANDLAN CHAPTER

Meetings are held at the South Charleston Library. Doors open at 6:30pm.

January 14, 2019 – Members' travel photos.

February 11, 2019 – Doug Wood will talk about old growth forests.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

Jan. – Pat Collins 304-375-2309

Jan. 3, 2019 – Ohio River Eagle Watch, 8:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

Jan. 10, 2019 – Program, 6:30pm, Vienna Public Library, bring finger food.

Jan. 17, 2019 – Duck Route, Muskingum River, 8:00am, Big Sandy Superstore, or 8:30 at Rinky Dink's in Marietta, bring lunch.

Jan. 24, 2019 – "The Wilds", Ohio, all-day trip, 9:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

Jan. 30- Feb 1, 2019 – Killdeer Plains, Ohio. Overnight details later.

Feb. – Gene Hilton 304-428-8641

Feb. 7, 2019 – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, Northwest Pipe Drive.

Feb. 14, 2019 – Middle Island area, 8:00am. Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77, bring lunch.

Feb. 21, 2019 – Ohio River, Little Hocking Area, 9:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7; bring lunch.

Feb. 28-Mar 1, 2019 – Funk/Killbuck, Ohio. Overnight details later.

Mar. – Shirley Radcliffe 304-428-8520

Mar. 7, 2019 – Sandy Creek Backwater & area, 9:00am. Boat ramp, Northwest Drive.

Mar. 14, 2019 – Seneca Lake, Ohio, 8:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, WV bring lunch.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

CANAAN VALLEY NWR

January 12, 2019 – Early Winter Bird Walk, 8:00am. We never know who will appear for our Freeland boardwalk winter walks, from year-round residents such as Wilson's Snipe and Golden-crowned Kinglets, to winter visitors such as Rough-legged Hawks, and even rarities such as Evening Grosbeaks. If you're curious, meet Casey Rucker at the Refuge visitor center; binoculars are available.

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

January 12, 2019 – Winter Bird Walk, 7:30am at the USGS Fish Health Lab, Leetown, WV. This event is free and open to the public, however, registration is strongly encouraged. Join PVAS on an Early Winter Bird Walk at the USGS Fish Health Lab property! 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.

January 16, 2019 – 'Third Wednesday' Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve, 7:30am. This event is free and open to the public, however, registration is strongly encouraged. 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.

See the following for more great info: www.potomacaudubon.org.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

See the following for more great info: www.wvstateparks.com/calendar.html



BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

MARCH 8-10, 2019

NORTH BEND STATE PARK

The Early Spring Meeting will be at North Bend State Park. Come and join us for a weekend of fun, fellowship, programs, field trips, adventures and our board and general membership meetings. Registration and check-in time is 3:00 pm on Friday with dinner at 6:30 pm. Departure will be on Sunday after the annual membership meeting. Speakers for the weekend will include popular Ohio naturalist and photographer Jim McCormac, and we’re hoping for a representative from the Merlin app/Macaulay Lab at Cornell.

The annual membership meeting will be Sunday morning.

North Bend State Park is nestled in the north-western section of WV and is easily accessible from four-lane U.S. 50 that goes from Parkersburg to Clarksburg across north central WV.

- Driving east, take U.S. 50 to junction with WV 31 South. Take WV 31 South to Cairo and follow the signs to the park.
- Driving west, take US 50 to WV 16 at Ellenboro, then WV 16 to Harrisville and follow the signs to the park.

This year, lunch on Sunday is not included since, in the past, many left before lunch. The price for the weekend has been reduced accordingly. You may have lunch at the dining room on Sunday but you will have to pay for it separately.

Deadline for reservations is January 31, 2019

Make checks payable to **BROOKS BIRD CLUB** and mail to:

Richard Esker

104 Wellesley Dr.

Washington, WV 26181

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

FULL TIME – INCLUDES ALL MEALS, LODGING AND REGISTRATION

2 PEOPLE PER ROOM \$135.00 EACH..... \$_____

NAME OF PERSON SHARING ROOM _____

(Roommate will be assigned if no preference is given.)

SINGLE ROOM \$205.00 EACH \$_____

PART TIME - CALL OR SEND E-MAIL FOR PART-TIME COSTS.

304-863-8765 eskerrb@frontier.com

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$_____

INCLUDE E-MAIL OR MAIL ADDRESS FOR RESERVATION CONFIRMATION



...

They're HERE...

– Evening Grosbeaks are flooding south. This female was photographed by Elliot Kirschbaum at his feeder in Shepherdstown, WV. Keep your eyes open!

WHAT'S INSIDE

Editor's Message 1

Message From Our New President..... 1

2018-2019 WV Christmas Bird Counts 2

2018 Eastern Shore Trip Report 3-4

2018 Fall Meeting Report 4

Interviews with Greg Miller & Bruce Beehler..... 5

Remembering Ben Stout 6

The Holiday Weekend In Gotham..... 6, 9

Correspondence 6

News & Notes From Rosie Campbell 7

LeJay Graffious in The Highlands Voice..... 7

Interesting Sightings Around The State..... 8-9

Changes In Contact Information..... 10

Chapter Happenings/Nature Happenings..... 10

2018 Early Spring Meeting Form 11