



THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA
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JANUARY – FEBRUARY – MARCH 2019

RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note

In a few short months, many of us will be enjoying our 80th Foray at Camp Pioneer in Beverly, south of Elkins. Your Foray notice should arrive around the same time as this Mail Bag, and we encourage you to attend. We are planning some special guests and fun field trips to celebrate eighty years of joining for scientific study and travel. Come join us!

Please find time to enjoy the spring migration. Ducks have streamed through, and we saw most every duck and grebe species during the Early Spring Meeting field trip. Rarities have been seen across the street, and you never know what might show up with the warm weather.

While birding, don't forget to respect property lines and the overall safety of the birds. Most all people out there know the unspoken rules of conduct, but occasionally the lines are crossed. If we all are careful and thoughtful, everyone gets to enjoy the birds.

Turn to pages 10 and 11 to find listings of many outings with the various chapters and affiliates throughout the state. Field trips to Ohio are included, and there are many interesting places that we may visit. Enjoy!

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JANICE EMRICK

Did you know?

You can certify your yard as a wildlife habitat if you create a no-mow yard full of native plants. Many animals, including birds, need insects to survive and 90% of insects can eat only one native plant. So plant a variety of native host plants and native nectar plants.

There are new guidelines for 2019 if you rear Monarch butterflies indoors. According to the Xerces Society, raising more than ten Monarchs indoors may cause more harm than good. Captive breeding can raise the risk that parasites can be spread to the wild monarchs when released. Continuous rearing can dilute genetic diversity and also have adverse effects on the wild population. We can help the Monarchs more by planting native milkweed and flowers (nectar plants), avoiding pesticides, supporting wildlife-friendly and organic agriculture, and pushing for policy changes. The good news is that Monarch Watch says the eastern Monarch butterfly population has increased by 144 % over last year and is higher than it has been in over a decade. The western Monarch population has continued to decline.

Bee houses may bring disease and more wasps than birds over time. Instead, try to leave untilled ground, corners of rough grass, logs, brush piles, tree stumps and tree snags for native bees.

Attend Foray this year from June 7-15 and you may learn more about birds and nature than you ever knew!

— Janice Emrick, BBC President

TO OUR FRIEND, BILL THOMPSON



*Our Fearless Leader,
Carl Slater, posing
with Flat William –
Photo by Janice Emrick*

As many of you might already know, our friend and longtime BBC member, Bill Thompson, has pancreatic cancer and has recently been given a prognosis of only months to enjoy his family, friends and the birds

that he has dedicated much of his life to. For as long as I've known him, Bill has been gracious with his wit, his knowledge and his boundless enthusiasm for life. To understand Bill's feelings on all of this, please visit www.caringbridge.org/visit/bt3updates. I strongly recommend reading his March 5th entry for the full story.

Bill has been a part in many of our lives, from Birdwatcher's Digest to field trips to participating in bird club events. I know it would mean a lot to him if we all took time to send him a letter, a photo or whatever you find thoughtful, to continue to brighten his days. One rarely has the chance to do this in such a situation, but it is our chance to send the gift of a bit of our hearts.

In the above photo, BBC Administrator and Fearless Leader Carl Slater is holding a picture of Flat William. William has been photographed in many places and the images have been sent to Bill. We also have nice photos of the whole BBC group with it at the ORINWR.

Peace be with you, Bill, from your BBC family.

EARLY SPRING MEETING HAS GREAT BIRDING

Nothing brings the Brooks Bird Club together better than birding. This March 8-10, around 45 of us traveled back to North Bend State Park for a weekend of great birds, great speakers and lots of friendship.

We were ushered into Ritchie County by a bit of snow and rain. First on the docket was a board meeting, at which much was accomplished for the good of the club. The remaining non-board members enjoyed each other's company, and some walked around the park.

After a good dinner, complete with bird egg crispy treats created by Jeanne Barnes, Cullen Hanks of the Macauley Lab and eBird gave us a fantastic program on how the Lab, eBird and the public are working in concert to improve how data is collected and used to improve the birding application and the education therein. He customized his talk for our area, too.

The next morning, most members prepared for a good day's birding, which started with a Pine Warbler in the yard at the lodge. As we drove through Cairo, Black Vultures flew from their roost, and a raven soared by. The road to the ORINWR Center netted us a Red-shouldered Hawk, blackbirds and grackles. A Fox Sparrow and Brown Thrasher were highlights at the center's feeders.

From there, we headed to Willow Island Dam, where some birded while others went in smaller groups to see the American White Pelican that has been at a nearby pond for a couple of weeks. Everyone got fantastic views of the rarity.

On to French Creek, where we were treated to Common and Red-breasted Mergansers and a few assorted ducks.



*A nice shot with wings outstretched. –
Photo by Becky Szabo*



*Not an everyday view in West Virginia! –
Photo by Cindy Burkhart*

Newell's Run also had a smattering of ducks and grebes, as well as passerines.

The Shaner gravel pond was a hot spot, starting with continuing Red-necked Grebes and a hunting kestrel. Over our half-hour there, five eagles entertained us, a meadowlark buzzed by, and more ducks appeared in scope-view.



*Group at the ORINWR visitor's center –
Photo by Janice Emrick*

On the way back to NBSP, some of us picked up a shoveler in St. Mary's. In Harrisville, at the boat launch, five Red-headed Woodpeckers were very visible, as was another adult Bald Eagle. Kettles of Black and Turkey Vultures took us home.

Dinner and more eggy treats preceded another great presentation, this time by well-known Ohio naturalist Jim McCormac, who spoke about caterpillars and their life cycles, as well as their interaction with the environment overall. Jim's crisp photography punctuated each slide. Afterward, some hunted for salamanders, as it had stormed while we ate.

Breakfast and a membership meeting on Sunday morning ended our time at the Early Spring Meeting. Until next time...

written by Ed.

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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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

2018-19 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

18 brave individuals participated in the ONA CBC today with half of the day being cold, rainy and somewhat windy. We observed 63 total species. Some of the highlights included the following: Gadwall (4); American Black Duck (14); Green-winged Teal (4); Lesser Scaup (17); Wild Turkey (92); Red-breasted Nuthatches (43); and Fox Sparrow (6).

– David Patick, Huntington, WV, 12/16/18

The Morgantown Area CBC was held on Saturday, December 15. We had 13 teams of 29 birders in the field. We tallied 77 species on count day. Including count week birds, we had 21 fewer species than last year, mainly due to the lack of waterfowl.

The highlights were a Ruffed Grouse, a Long-eared Owl and a White-eyed Vireo. Interestingly, the WEVI was in the same area as found last year. New birds added were Lincoln's Sparrow found by Derek Courtney and Hannah Clipp. Vesper Sparrow was found by two teams lead by Alan Clark and Chris Lituma.

– LeJay Graffious, Bruceton Mills, WV

The 2018 Charleston CBC was conducted on Saturday, December 15, 2018. In all, 21 individuals participated in nine field teams and two feeder watchers. We tallied 62 species in the course of the day. Highlights from this year's count include 3 Peregrine Falcons, 3 Merlins, 5 Winter Wrens, a Gray-Cheeked Thrush, and 3 Blackpoll Warblers.

– Doren Burrell, Charleston, WV

My grandson Luke and I went to Moorefield and participated in the CBC. We rode around with Kathy King all day. Luke was the official starling and Mallard counter, while Kathy and I looked for anything unusual. Luke counted over 1,000 starlings and 200 Mallards. He also found a stinky skull in an abandoned barn while he was looking for Barn Owls. He did find lots of owl pellets. He's using the skull for his first science fair project. We had a very low turnout for our count, but still amassed at least 62 species at last count.

– Jane Whitaker, Washington, D.C., 12/28/18

Pipestem CBC last Saturday recorded 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 the next day featured miserable weather. It rained most of the day. The tally of 43 was a little below that of past years. I can't help but wonder about the low numbers of some of the species that we used to see in high numbers. For 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?

– Mindy Waldron, Surveyor, WV

16 individuals participated today in the Huntington CBC. The temperature was around 38 with cloudy skies for most of the day. Some of the findings included American Black Duck (5); Mallard (168); Bufflehead (1); Hooded Merganser (8); Eastern Screech-owl (11); Great Horned Owl (3); Barred Owl (2); Red-shouldered Hawk (21), tying the record for this CBC; and Red-breasted Nuthatch (27). We also had one Brown Thrasher.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV, 12/29/18

The Parkersburg Christmas Bird Count was on Saturday, December 29. The birding was very slow. We had the lowest number of species for the past ten years, mostly because there were no ducks on the river. We also had low numbers for most individual species. One high number was Chipping Sparrow. The weather was decent – about 40 degrees and cloudy. No rain.

– Dick & Jeanette Esker, Washington, WV

The Pendleton CBC held on December 18, 2018. Many thanks to the excellent and conscientious 10 field participants (and several feeder watchers). Special thanks to the Ruddle sisters for organizing and compiling the results from the feeder watchers. Carolyn Ruddle organized this count for decades before I inherited it from her.

We found 67 species and 3 additional count week birds. Most notable were a Spotted Sandpiper at the Franklin WTP found by James Fox, a Pine Warbler in the pines in the Brandywine sector, and a record-breaking 24 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 22 of which were in the pines in the Brandywine sector. This count was triple our previous high. The warbler and sandpiper were only the second sightings in the 41 years of the count. Other unusual sightings for this count were Chipping Sparrow (seen 6 previous years) and Wilson's Snipe (seen 3 previous years). The rivers were very fast and deep, perhaps explaining our low number for Great Blue Heron. Winter finches were quite low especially considering that this is an irruption year for some of them. Cedar berries were scarce, perhaps explaining why there were so few Cedar Waxwings, bluebirds, and robins. We had new high counts of White-throated Sparrow, Red-shouldered Hawk, Brown Creeper, and Common Merganser. There were dramatically lower-than-average counts of titmouse, Cedar Waxwing, robin, House Finch, American Crow, starling, and Winter Wren.

– Fred Atwood, Cabins, WV

(continued on page 4)

2018-19 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS (CONT.)

Many thanks to the 21 intrepid surveyors who found 2,060 individuals of 48 species on the Canaan Christmas Bird Count, in spite of a chilly, rainy day on December 16. Many observers trekked for many hours finding very few birds. During Count Week we also found Northern Harrier, Hermit Thrush, and Fox Sparrow. Surprising misses included Rough-legged Hawk, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin.

The outstanding birds of the day were our first Ruby-crowned Kinglet in 26 years of the count, a Brown Thrasher, and 33 Evening Grosbeaks. Our count joins the club of finding a record number of Red-breasted Nuthatches during this irruption year. We also recorded new high numbers for Mourning Dove, Eastern Screech-Owl, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, House Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal. We tied the record for Downy Woodpecker.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV

The Athens/Princeton, Mercer County CBC was conducted on 26 December 2018. There were 50 species and 2,610 individuals. High counts included Canada Goose (277); Mallard (82); Great Blue Heron (4); Turkey Vulture (200); Cooper's Hawk (4); Red-shouldered Hawk (17); Red-tailed Hawk (11); Downy Woodpecker (25); Northern Flicker (6); Peregrine Falcon (1); Common Raven (10); Tufted Titmouse (104); White-breasted Nuthatch (38); Winter Wren (5); Carolina Wren (52); Northern Mockingbird (26); Chipping Sparrow (2); Eastern Towhee (13); House Sparrow (288).

– Ron Canterbury, Cincinnati, OH

This CBC season, as in the last fifteen, we had another great Buffalo Creek count. We located 69 species on our count day, December 16th 2018, plus one additional species during our count week! We matched or exceeded high bird tallies in 8 species. We added two new species, Common Yellowthroat and American Pipit. Out in the field, we had 49 birders, with an additional 11 feeder/yard watchers counting birds.

– Larry Helgerman, Wheeling, WV

FIRST WV BIRDS OF JANUARY 1, 2019

One of the numerous Blue Jays wintering in my yard. It was "sharing" seeds with a male towhee. Or rather they were both scratching around under the feeder together, kind of pecking at each other. May we all be as beautifully dressed and be as alert as jays this coming year, fiercely protecting our clans and calling out danger. But also be good at snooping around and finding things that are just plain interesting.

– Laura Ceperley

Judy's first bird of 2019 was American Goldfinch and mine was Downy Woodpecker.

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV

My first of the year bird was a male Hairy Woodpecker enjoying a suet cake breakfast. My second was a Carolina Wren, beneath the suet feeder, that was picking up the bits of suet dropped by the Hairy. A peaceful start to 2019. Happy New Year and good birding in 2019!

– Shannon Burner, Keyser, WV

My first bird of the year was a Carolina Wren!

– Wendy Perrone, Brooks, WV

Took a long while to see first birds: two arrived simultaneously at the feeder, once the 48 mph winds died back a bit: a chickadee and a titmouse.

Paula Hallberg, Cabin Mountain, WV

The first bird I heard in the new year was a Blue Jay. I could hear it outside from my living room with the curtains closed. The first bird I saw in 2019 was an American Goldfinch drinking at the pond. Wishing us all many birds in 2019,

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV

My firsts were a male Red-bellied Woodpecker and a male Pileated Woodpecker waiting for me to fill the suet feeders. A happy and birdie New Year to all.

– Wil Hershberger, Hedgesville, WV

The first bird was a chickadee, visible in the morning darkness because of the white feathers. When I hung the feeders back out a Brown Creeper moved on the trunk of the tree. A bit later I saw two creepers on the same tree. A pair of mockingbirds just showed up on the

feeder tray. Despite the balmy but breezy day the suet is in high demand.

– Bruni Haydl, Charles Town, WV

First here was a small squadron of Carolina Chickadees popping in and out of the feeder.

– Bev Delidow, Huntington, WV

Gary Rankin, Mike Griffith, Janet Keating and I did our traditional New Years day birding. We saw a total of 57 species and the highlights of the day were 5 Tundra Swans and a flock of 100 American Pipits seen in Mason County.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

My FOY bird was a Blue Jay.

– Jackie Burns, Davis, WV

WV BREEDING BIRD ATLAS NEEDS BIRD PHOTOS

Many, many thanks to the excellent photographers who have provided photos for the upcoming publication of the second West Virginia breeding bird atlas. Thanks to your contributions, we are well on our way to having WV photos of nearly all of our breeding birds.

Our press guidelines require that images be at least 300 dpi, 2.5" tall, and 3.5" wide. We need the county location where each photograph was taken, and we are trying only to use photos taken in counties where the pictured species breeds. If the photo shows any breeding activity (carrying nest material or food, feeding young, etc.), so much the better!

Because of limited bandwidth for emails, if you have one or more photos you are willing for us to consider, please email me with a small-file version of each photo. We can provide thumb drives for mailing large-file photos to WVDNR. If you've already sent photos either to Rich Bailey or to me, no need to send the same ones again. Please email me for a complete list of species we need photos of.

Many thanks in advance.

– Casey Rucker, Dry Fork, WV
autoblock@frontiernet.net

DOTTIE SANDERS PASSES AT 91 YEARS



Dorothy "Dottie" (Foley) Sanders, 90, of Charleston, WV, formerly of Kingwood, died on Sunday, January 27, 2019, at Hubbard Hospice

House in Charleston.

Dottie was born December 22, 1928, in Albright, a daughter of the late Dwight L. and Katherine (Elliott) Foley.

Dottie is described as a renaissance woman. She was a member of the Kingwood Baptist Church where she played piano for many years. She taught Art, Science, Math and Biology for Preston County Schools and for Garrett County Schools in Oakland, MD. She needed only to complete her oral exam to be awarded her Doctorate in Botany from WVU. Dottie was gifted in calligraphy and was certified as a handwriting analysis expert and at times would be called to testify in court. She enjoyed sign language, candy making, cake decorating and she had visited every state in the US except Hawaii and North Dakota. She worked at Yellowstone National Park in her youth and in her later years was on staff at Oglebay Institute Camps for many years. Dottie was known for her service to others up until her passing.

She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Katherine "Kit" and Chris Reed of Charleston; her nieces, nephews and spouses, Jill (Kirk) Bowermaster, of Morgantown, June (Herman) and Galen Clemmer of Bethel, PA, Mike and Lu Ann Foley, Kristin and Kevin Thomas, Pat and Cindy Foley, all of Kingwood; special cousin, Dwight Foley of Charleston; grandson, Ethan Reed of Charleston; many special friends, many great-nieces and nephews, and great-great nieces and nephews.

WE'LL MISS DON SHEARER



Donald Ray Shearer, devoted husband, father and grandfather, dedicated and loyal career employee, a WWII survivor and American

patriot, passed away on February 21, 2019, one-month shy of his 97 birthday.

A native of West Virginia, he attended Charleston High School. After graduating in 1941, he went to work at Owens-Illinois Glass Company in Charleston. Six months later the United States entered WWII. Don enlisted in the Army Air Corps, became a radio operator-gunner on the Martin B-26 Marauder in the 573rd Squadron of the 391st Bombardment Group and deployed to Matching Green, England. On his 46th bombing mission over German-occupied France, his plane was attacked, caught fire, and crashed. The pilot ordered the crew to jump and upon seeing the bombardier and co-pilot exit the airplane, both of whom were on fire, Don jumped. The pilot and two air crew members did not survive the crash.

What followed was a series of events and a little-known story of 168 allied airman imprisoned at the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Their story and Don's included evasion and rescue, betrayal, capture, and interrogation by the German Gestapo, imprisonment at the infamous Buchenwald Concentration Camp, and a race against time to escape execution, a torturous cold winter march, and controversial hush-up that followed liberation by General Patton's Third Army on April 29, 1945, after nine months of captivity. Their story is captured in the 2011 award-winning documentary, "The Lost Airmen of Buchenwald," directed by Mike Dorsey.

A half-century later, he returned to France as honored guest in the town of Vert-en-Drouais. He memorialized the unveiling of the monument honoring his pilot and crewmen who perished, and celebrated with his French rescuers and resistance forces, the consequences of patriotic acts - liberty regained. Don always reminded his audiences the price of freedom..."we are the land of the free and the home of the brave because over 400,000 (WWII) American forces did not come home."

After the war Don returned to Charleston, WV and started what would become a 36-year career with Union Carbide Company, first as an hourly laborer, and retiring as a safety supervisor. In 1951, Don married Martha Frances Moore. They had one daughter, Donna Rae. Don enjoyed traveling and was a long-time member of Brooks Bird Club. He visited all fifty states and six continents.

He will be remembered by countless grade school to college age students, that heard his wartime story and emotional testimony "Freedom is not Free." He would give Veterans Day talks and share: "I made this vow to myself while suffering from the hellish, almost unbelievable treatment in Buchenwald, that once free, if I was not truly hungry, truly cold or nearly scared to death, I would not complain. I have kept that vow and benefited by so doing." Don's life came full circle with the birth of grandson. Dee Dee, as he was called, played a special role in raising his grandson, LT Nicholas Johnson, USN. He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister Norma Jean Shearer Smith and husband Phil Smith. He is survived by his wife and daughter, son-in-law Ed Johnson, his grandson and wife, McKenna Johnson.

A private memorial and interment ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery are planned. In lieu of flowers, donations in Don's memory can be made to Gold Star Teen Adventures (Gold Star Teen Adventures, 3350 Footbridge Lane, Ste. 124, Fayetteville, NC 28306) a program to enhance the lives of children of fallen military members.

FRENCH FLAMINGO

Text and photos contributed by Norma Jean Venable

Pink. From beak to wings to legs, very pink. The bird stood out out like one of those garish garden plastic flamingos. But this was not a fake lawn ornament.

This flamingo was real. It stood, along with its pink-feathered comrades, in a salty etang, or lagoon, in southern France. To be more geographically exact, the French Mediterranean coast in an area named The Camargue.

The Camargue, which consists of thousands of acres of Mediterranean wetlands, is a Biosphere Reserve with salty lagoons—and flamingos—and inland freshwater marshes and agricultural areas home to wetland birds.

This diverse habitat, which has over 400 bird species, is also a migration corridor for birds flying south from Europe to the Mediterranean and Africa. This wetlands also attracts many migrating bird watchers—like me. To indulge my many birding binges, husband Wally and I rented a houseboat—a type called a Penichette—for a two week April Camargue cruise. Our boat, named ARNEL, is best described as a floating apartment complete with kitchen and all conveniences.



We boarded our boat at Lottes, loaded the kitchen with plenty of baguettes and French wine and started out, only to discover that extensive flooding had closed locks and rivers in the central Camargue we had planned to cruise. Instead we headed for the salt marsh areas around Aigues Mortes.

During our trip, we used many different types of places with various levels of amenities to tie up Arnel for the night. Urban moorings, such as at Aigues Mortes, offered easy access to numerous docks and slips, including water and electricity, for which we paid. But no birds.

Near another overnight stop, our chart indicated a tie-up place listed as a “Nature Mooring.” This sounded more promising. It was in a remote area and hard to find. Motoring along on a very empty waterway, we finally saw a partly broken and saltbush-obscured sign stating “Nature Mooring.” Well, we had found the mooring, which left me with the next hurdle—literally—for this birder's 70-some year old legs: leaping with Arnel's mooring line across an expanse of muddy water, hopefully to land on a slippery muddy bank and affix Arnel's mooring line to a jagged and crooked steak without getting a mud bath or joining the water's local fish population. I managed, and tied up Arnel. (Untied boats tend to drift downstream leaving the careless boater-birder marooned.).

With Arnel tied up and secure for the evening and Wally checking out the wine, I grabbed binocs and went in search of birds. Another occupation slightly fraught with peril. The Nature Mooring was indeed nature, if not quite natural. We were on an island. No houses, no humans. But the knobbly indented ground beneath me did indicate an excess of urban wildlife. Those craggy subterranean holes did not suggest cozy Hobbit holes, but ankle-breaking below ground excavations of Bugs Bunny relatives. Also abundant were murky water pools of unknown depth half concealed with layers of saltbush, ready to gobble and submerge the unwary. Nearby tracks covered with squishy manure, and a distant brazen bray, indicated feral burros. I reminded myself that while looking up for birds, not to fall in a rabbit hole, drown in a water pit, or fall in burrow dung. Just for a second, the advantages of obstacle-free backyard birding did occur to me.

Avoiding birder's badlands, I clambered to an elevated area where I looked out over the nearby brackish lagoon separating our island from the mainland.

To behold my French Flamingo.

Birder's reward: Not just one, but dozens of flamingos, foraging, flying, a florid field of pink pulchritude. In terms of color, think “flamingo flambe.”

Actually, the flamingo's name originates from the Latin word “flamma,” or flame, describing the bird's rare among birds flaming color.



The French Flamingos I was ooling and ahing over are the Greater Flamingo and number around 30,000. Most of them live on the Mediterranean Coast but also live in parts of Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Other flamingo species are Lesser Flamingo, with black beak and red eyes which lives in Africa, American Flamingo which has deep red plumage and lives in Central America, and the Chilean, Andean, and James Flamingo. Classification is based on beak rims, and foot webbing.

Fast Greater Flamingo Facts: The pink color comes from eating crustaceans including shrimp which contain carotene (as in carrots.) These crustaceans live in salty lagoons where the birds feed—with the help of their long, long necks which have 19 vertebrae (compared to our 7). Greater Flamingos nest in spring in one place in the Camargue—Lake Fangassier (where we were unable to go due to flooding.)

Birds nest in colonies and the female lays one egg. Young birds are much lighter in color than adults; maturity is between 3 to 5 years of age and with luck the birds can live for 35 years.

Flamingos' webbed feet help the avoid sinking in the mud and also make them a wading bird capable of swimming. Flamingos are excellent flyers and can travel over 40 miles per hour. Many of The Camargue's flamingos do use

their flying skills to migrate for the winter to Spain and Africa, however about 30 percent remain all year.

Fantastic, those flamingos. Fortunately, Arnel's spacious level decks provided the perfect water platform for extensive flamingo watching and photographing. On looking over my collection of photos from France—the majority are flamingos!

Although pink presides in The Camargue, there are many other colorful birds. My list includes the striking and hard to find Purple Heron, the ubiquitous Grey Heron, a nesting White Stork, plentiful Common Shelducks, Pied Wagtail, Black Kite, Common Kingfisher, and the unexpected sighting of a Ruff.

Camargue birding is definitely up scale.

Now, back home WV, I'm wondering—I'm not much on lawn ornaments, but as a reminder of all that French pink panache, our local garden store has a special on plastic pink flamingos, and I'm tempted...

CORRESPONDENCE

Greetings from sunny Arizona!

Betsy and I are enjoying our 8th winter here in Tucson. We have been enjoying hiking, biking, line dancing, chorale and a little bit of ferning and bird watching.

Our birding notables: Elegant Trogon, White-throated Thrush, Costas Hummingbird, Pyrrhuloxia and Vermilion Flycatcher. Notable ferns: Wavy Scaly Cloakfern, Narrow Cloakfern, Fairy Sword and Star Fern.

We have put together a 2018 "Annual Report" and it can be viewed here: www.EpicRoadTrips.us/2018/

Although we love spending our winters here in Arizona we are already day dreaming about Spring in our beloved West Virginia.

— Mike and Betsy Breiding, Wheeling/Tucson

Dear friends at BBC,

Please accept this gift in memory of Stu Robbins. Stu and I met at Foray back in the late 70's and remained friends for years. I was shocked and deeply saddened at his passing. I know he stayed active in the Club all his life. I will never forget the late night owling expeditions.

— Jeanie Anderson Masters

Seeing Mike Haller's photo in the last newsletter reminded me of an unusual experience 60-some years ago.

Friends from the early Oglebay and Terra Alta days, Mike was at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton and I was an editorial writer on the Dayton Daily News. Mike phoned and asked if I would like to see the flight of the Woodcock. Of course! He told me about a back road into a remote part of the base and said to go there after sundown to the first crossroad and just park there and wait. I asked the head of the nature museum and a couple of friends to drive with me to the designated spot. After a few minutes, a security car pulled up.

I must note that this was at the height of the Cold War, when relations between our country and the Soviet Union were extremely tense. The air base, with its Strategic Air Command, was on high alert.

Well, the security officer saw four of us standing there with our binoculars and he barked out, "What the hell are you doing here?" One of us said, "We're waiting to see the mating flight of the Woodcock." He said, "Ohhhh", as if he'd just met some escapees from the insane asylum. He sped off, leaving a trail of dust.

Thanks to Mike, the woodcocks performed in the dusk just as he predicted—the males circling high, then diving to land close to the females and, after a bit of chatting, repeating the show. We birders, considered too loony to get arrested, had a memorable thrill.

— Walter Rybeck

WALLACE EDWARD HOFFMAN PASSES

Wallace Edward Hoffmann, born on June 10, 1954 in Fairmont, West Virginia, to Joseph and Caroline Smith Hoffmann, passed away at age 64 on January 18, 2019 in Kingston Springs, TN. Wally attended Bard College and West Liberty State College where he earned an associate degree in historic preservation. Wallace was married to Amy Hart. He is survived by his stepdaughter, Emily Derek; brother, Andrew Hoffmann; sister, Holly Hoffmann; and grandchild, Hero DeSimone. Wallace loved bird watching, street luge, and woodworking and playing upright bass.

12TH SOUTHERN WV SPRING EAGLE SURVEY

Here are the results of our eagle survey on March 2, 2019, including Three Rivers Avian Center, Bibbee Nature Club, Hanging Rock Migration Observatory, Pipestem State Park and guests.

Bertha – Allen Waldron, Bob Dameron, Josh Parks & Chris Mullens. 2 BAEA* (1 adult & 1 3rd-year)

Mouth of the Bluestone River – 24 participants. 9 BAEA – (1 adult, 5 1st-year, 2 3rd-year & 1 4th-year)

Bluestone State Park – John Hawkins, Jim (compiler) & Judy Phillips. 7 BAEA – (2 adults, 2 1st-year, 2 2nd-year & 1 4th-year). 1 GOEA** - 1 immature

Rt. 20 Overlook (south of Bluestone Dam) – 11 participants. 7 BAEA – (4 1st-year, 2 2nd-year & 1 3rd-year).

Bellepoint – Charlie Kahle, Dale Porter & Sharyn Ogden. 3 BAEA – (2 adults & 1 1st-year)

Mouth of Madam's Creek – Bev & Jim Triplett. 1 unidentified eagle.

Brooks Falls – Alma Lowry & Mindy Waldron. No eagles.

Brooks Overlook – Jessy Perrine, Shelby Chapman, Ron & Wendy Perrone. 2 BAEA (adults).

Rt. 122 – Leigh Prince & David Shrewsbury. No eagles.

Hans Creek Valley – Maury Johnson, Bob & Gladys Carter. No Eagles.

Red Sulphur Springs – Rodney & Julie Bragg. 1 BAEA (adult).

Greenbrier River (Alderson to Hinton) – Doug Wood, Dianne Anestis, Ronald, Gwendolyn, Roslyn & Gabriel McAllister. 3 BAEA (2 adults & 1 1st-year).

66 participants located 34 Bald Eagles (11 adults, 13 1st-year, 4 2nd-year, 4 3rd-year & 2 4th-year), 1 Unidentified eagle and 1 Golden Eagle (immature)

* BAEA = Bald Eagle

**GOEA = Golden Eagle

Conditions - 38-49 F, 100% cloud cover, NW wind 0-10 mph & good visibility.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

Looking out the kitchen window yesterday morning, I was treated to the sight of a male Blue-headed Vireo flying to some foliage near our stream. It then flew to the rocks edging the stream, and was there briefly before being scared off by some other birds flying in. It flew over to the woods edge nearby and out of sight. I watched for a bit longer, but did not see it return. I had previously reported seeing a Blue-headed Vireo on October 31 of this year, which at that time was the latest date I had ever observed this species in the yard. So to say I was surprised at yesterday's appearance of this late migrant is an understatement. A new red letter day for me.

– Carol Del-Colle, Summit Point, WV, 11/8/18

Five times on Sunday around Hardy County, I saw Golden Eagles at very close range soaring overhead, most being immatures. What a beautiful eagle!

– Diane Holsinger, 11/12/18

Josh Holland, Mike Griffith, Gary Rankin and I left Huntington at 5 am today to do some birding in Canaan Valley, with the major target bird being the Evening Grosbeak. It was chilly with the temperature around 28 and snow showers with west winds at 20 mph and gusts higher at times. As we turned off Rte. 32 to Cortland Road, we were immediately greeted by a total of 50 Evening Grosbeaks feeding on sumac berries. I have not seen Evening Grosbeaks since January 5, 2008, which were also found off Cortland Road. Other birds seen included two Rough-legged Hawks, an American Kestrel, a Red-tailed Hawk, an adult Bald Eagle, and a Rusty Blackbird.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV, 12/22/18

Judy and I decided to go to the Cheese-n-More store in Gap Mills, Monroe County today and get lunch and enjoy it in view of Peters Mt. It didn't take long to see it was going to be a great day for raptors along the roadside. Here's what we found: Bald Eagle (12); America Kestrel (16); Red-tailed Hawk (11); Cooper's Hawk (1); and Northern Harrier (2).

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 1/3/19

A male Painted Bunting was seen on January 6 by Josh Holland, Mike Griffith and myself in Jefferson County, WV, near Sheperdstown at a private residence, and the homeowner did not want the location to be publicized. Technically, this would be the 4th WV state record, as the 3rd state record would count when it was seen from January thru April 15, 2018, and it later left the area.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV, 1/10/19

Wow! Driving into town this a.m., I came over a rise just as a mature eagle lifted off a piece of carrion in a roadside field. I braked hard. With a couple of indignant crows harassing it, the bird wheeled and flew over the hood of my car! Fortunately, I had stopped to gape and s/he avoided a collision. Whew! It's impressive to see how HUGE these birds are when they fly by 6 feet from one's nose. It made the crows look like sparrows.

– Jean Neely, Near Shepherdstown, WV, 1/23/19

Stopped by Kimsey Run Lake this morning. There was a dead deer on the ice, and 25 eagles were feeding on the deer. They were sliding on ice as they came in to feed. What a sight. On the way back home from birding w/Kathy King, I saw 48 eagles in a cornfield feeding. Kimsey only had ONE mature Bald Eagle this evening. This morning two Bald Eagles were at the nest. Hope they do some repairing of the nest.

– Diane Holsinger, 2/4/19

It has been great waterfowl diversity in the Potomac counties this week, especially in the Shenandoah Valley. Today, Bob Dean and I visited several sites in Berkeley County and had Canada Goose (almost 1000 across all sites), 2 Cackling Geese (Shipper Court Pond), Green-winged Teal, Redhead (25 at Swan Pond), Canvasback, America Wigeon, Gadwall, Mallard, Ring-necked Duck (40 at Stonebridge Ponds), Northern Pintail, Black Duck, Mallard, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Horned Grebe (1 at West End Quarry), and Mute Swan (1 at Stonebridge). Swan Pond had 11 species of waterfowl.

In Jefferson County, the Shenandoah River was still high but we had Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Common Merganser, Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser & Common Goldeneye on the river plus 72 Redhead, 44 Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck and a Coot at Country Club Road Ponds. Later, I saw 4 Tundra Swans, Ring-necked Duck, and Canada Goose at Wardensville WTP in Hardy County. That was 21 waterfowl species in one day. We also had a harrier and Fish Crows in Berkeley County and a Bald Eagle in Jefferson County.



*Evening Grosbeak male in Canaan Valley
– photo by David Patick*



*A rare Painted Bunting in WV
– photo by David Patick*

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

Yesterday, at various flood control lakes between Sugar Grove and Brandywine in Pendleton County I saw Canada Goose, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Mallard, Common & Hooded Merganser, Lesser Scaup, Greater Scaup (11 at Broad Run Lake) and Canada Goose, plus an immature Golden Eagle at the high pass on Snowy Mountain Road. I found Red-breasted Nuthatches at two sites, in Virginia pines both times.

– Rodney Bartgis, Valley Bend, WV, 2/27/19

– *Sightings taken from
WVBird ListServ*



WINTER ORIOLE VISITS BBC MEMBER IN OH

My special visitor, a Baltimore Oriole, left on the 23rd of January. It was here for almost a month. Glad to share the photos.

– Fred McGee, Senecaville, OH



HALF MALE, HALF FEMALE CARDINAL FOUND IN ERIE, PA

Did you know that a rare gender-split cardinal was found at a backyard bird-feeder in Pennsylvania? Half its feathers are colored red like the male, and half are colored brown like the female. These are known as gynandromorphs, are uncommon, and this was found by a couple who have been feeding birds for 25 years.

INTERESTING SIGHTING OF MANDARIN DUCKS

A day or three after Christmas I was at the Marmet Locks and Dam, (Belle side), and a fisherman told me he saw some Mandarin Ducks on Christmas Eve. I didn't think that was possible and supposed they were Wood Ducks, American Widgeons or the like. He was insistent but I'm a little hard of hearing, (I didn't listen to him), and didn't let anyone else know.

A few days later, on December 29th, Joe Jarrell, Sue Westfall and I were on the Locks' property. We were birding along Burning Springs Creek next to the Kanawha River. The river level was up about ten feet which disperses birds from their normal hiding places. We were looking for waterfowl hiding in the weeds along the bank when two birds zoomed in like they owned the place. At first they were partially hidden in the flooded trees but we could make out the female. After seeing her, we naturally thought they were Wood Ducks.



Then the male came into view. Holy Moley! We couldn't believe our luck. I starting taking pictures right away. Joe and Sue called Bev/Chuck W. and I called my wife. We hoped the birds would stay until our fellow birders could get to the Locks. My wife and the Bev W. were able to make it while these beautiful birds were still in view. The Mandarins seem to be ravenous and were constantly feeding. We even saw them consume what looked to be small shiny fish.

Later that evening, Joe listed the Mandarins on eBird and I emailed folks from the Handlan Chapter-who I know make visits to the Marmet Locks. On the 30th, my wife and I got there at 7:45 a.m. but couldn't find the birds. As we were leaving Jason W. of Parkersburg

was coming in. We told him they were not to be seen and emailed our friends that. We went to the car but before we could get it started, Jason came running by to get his camera—to photograph some Mandarin Ducks! I re-notified our friends that I was dead-duck wrong and the birds were still there! We took photos for an hour or so and left. Later, as other members of the Handlan Chapter notified me they were arriving, I went back to help them



This time I happen to run into the fisherman who first saw them on Christmas Eve. He said, "I bet you're going to take pictures of those Mandarins aren't you!" He had a big grin on his face and was pointing at my camera. I had to admit that was exactly what I was doing and thanked him for the heads-up, (even though I didn't listen to him). He was out of work and I was able to help him find a job soon after this conversation. Hopefully, that gets me back into the good graces of this expert fisher-birder man! In addition to spotting the Mandarins at the Locks, he caught a 5-lb Walleye there!

Numerous folks observed the birds over the 30th, 31st. and I saw the male for the last time on Jan. 2nd, 2019. However, the species doesn't show up on any of the eBird search lists here in West Virginia so, unless I was with an individual, I don't have a way to actually check out who reported them or when.

It was a wonderful way to end up 2018 and start out 2019!

– *Story and photos by
Rick Gregg, Belle, WV*

CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

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CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

BIBBEE CHAPTER

April 27, 2019 – Ramp Dinner and Festival at Camp Creek State Park. We will lead bird and flower walks. Walks will probably start around 8 AM. Contact Allen and Mindy Waldron at mwaldron@suddenlink.net.

May 11, 2019 – Spring Migration Bird Count (NAMC). We count bird species for the day in the Pipestem CBC Circle and will meet for a tally at Hinton DQ. Contact Jim Phillips at jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com.

May-August 2019 – 6 AM-Noon, MAPS bird banding at Sandstone Falls (Raleigh Co.) and Wolf Creek (Fayette Co.). Contact Allen and Mindy Waldron for the specific dates.

May-September 2019 – 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. Leaders are Nancy Moran and Alma Lowry.

June 2019 – Date and time to be determined. We will have a trip to Betsy Reeder's property on Cave Ridge, Summers Co. WV. We will meet in Hinton and drive to the property.

HANDLAN CHAPTER

April 15, 2019 – Diana Green will tell us about the new "Forks of Coal" WV Natural Area. Meeting held at the South Charleston Library. Doors open at 6:30pm.

May 20, 2019 – 6:30pm, Annual Picnic at Coonskin Park. End of the year business meeting and annual picnic.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

April 16, 2019 – Program is Warblers by Mystery Guest! Bring a covered dish, place settings and drink. 6 PM for mingling, dinner at 6:30.

April 14, 2019 – Warblers/Wildflowers/Herons. Meet at Middle Creek Elementary School Parking lot at 9:00am.

April 24, 2019 – Sunfish Creek Outing. 8:00am at the Emrick's home or 8:30am in Cameron OH. Take OH 78 to Sunfish Creek Road (29-A) cross bridge over creek heading into Cameron, meet on the Cameron side of the bridge. We will work our way up Sunfish Creek and have lunch at Sylvia Bowen's cabin. Bring lunch and drinks.

May 4, 2019 – Captina Creek Birding Trail. Join us at 8:00a.m. at the Riverside Restaurant in Powhatan Point OH. This is a driving tour of the Captina Creek Birding Trail. The is the forth-year anniversary of the trail. We will be stopping along the way to enjoy the great birding this trail has to offer. Leaders from the BBC HQ Chapter will guide us. Bring lunch and drinks.

May 19, 2019 – Buffalo Creek PA Important Bird Area. Join us at 7:30a.m. at the historic S-Bridge at the intersection of Rt. 221 and Rt. 40 (parking lot on Rt. 40 just past S-Bridge). We will bird at the S-bridge for around 30 minutes so folks can have an arrival window. We will then bird throughout the IBA. Pack a lunch and bring drinks.

May 21, 2019 – Picnic/outing at Barkcamp State Park. Meet at the beach pavilion at 8:00am. We will bird in the morning, then eat lunch around noon. Bring a covered dish, drink and lawn chairs. For more information, contact Janice Emrick at emricksj@gmail.com.

May 25, 2019 – Grassland Birds. Meet at the Cadiz Animal Clinic at 8:00a.m. Upland Sandpipers, Bobolinks, Meadowlarks, Grasshopper Sparrows, Henslow Sparrows and Vesper Sparrows are some of our target birds.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

April Coordinator – Jeanette Esker
304-863-8765

April 4, 2019 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am, McDonough parking lot.

April 11, 2019 – Johnson T Janes Park, 8:00am, Parking lot, east end of 27th Street, Parkersburg.

April 18, 2019 – Elberfeld's Farm,

8:00am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7; bring lunch.

April 25, 2019 – Birds & Flowers, Newell's Run 8:00am, WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

May Coordinator – Nina Ott
304-863-6020

May 2, 2019 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am, McDonough parking lot.

May 9, 2019 – Ohio Birding Route Trail, 8:00am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7; bring lunch.

May 11, 2019 – SATURDAY – Pat Collins farm, 8:00am, WV Welcome Center, Williamstown. North American Migration Count.

May 16, 2019 – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am, McDonough parking lot.

May 23, 2019 – Lake Hope/Waterloo/Zaleski, 7:00am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7; bring lunch.

May 30, 2019 – "The Wilds", Ohio, 7:00am, WV Welcome Center, Williamstown, bring lunch.

June Coordinator – Jon Benedetti
304-295-8945

June 1, 2019 – SATURDAY - Birds & Breakfast, 7:00am, McDonough Log Cabin "A", bring finger food and drink.

June 6, 2019 – Crown City Wildlife Area, Ohio, 7:00am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339 / Rt. 7; bring lunch.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

Apr.-May 2018 – Birding 101. Classroom Sessions: Thursday evenings April 11, 18, 25 & May 2.

Birding 101 is tailored for beginning birders. It utilizes both classroom sessions and field trips to teach everything from bird identification to field etiquette to birding techniques and resources. This year the course will be taught by local birding

experts Wil Hershberger, Lynne Wiseman, Nancy Kirschbaum and Carol Winckler.

The classroom sessions will be held at the Hospice of the Panhandle's Education Center on four consecutive Thursday evenings (April 11, 18, 25 & May 2). The field trips will be held at various locations around the Panhandle from roughly 7 a.m.–12 noon on the corresponding Saturdays (April 13, 20, 27 and May 4).

Class size will be limited to 24 participants. The course is open to people of all ages but children younger than 15 must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is required, and a fee is involved.

For questions, email Krista Hawley at adultprograms@potomacaudubon.org or call 681-252-1387.

Apr. 20, 2018 – Spring Bird Walk at USGS Fish Health Lab, 10:30 AM. USGS Fish Health Lab, 407 Reservoir Road.

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

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

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

May 3-5, 2019 – Webster County Nature Tour. Enjoy Spring in the beautiful hills of Webster County, WV, by participating in this special 3-day weekend. Nature Tour takes place at Camp Caesar 4-H Camp on Rt. 20 between Cowen and Webster Springs, WV. Our guests will stay in the rustic log and cut-stone cabins surrounded by the beautiful hills of the Monongahela National Forest.

The cost of this fun-filled weekend is \$130.00 which includes 5 meals, 2 nights lodging, nightly program or entertainment, your choice of tours. There will be a Meditation Walk and a Bird Watch on Sunday. If you want to participate in everything but not stay at Camp Caesar the cost will be \$80.00. Saturday breakfast, bagged lunch, tour and dinner will be \$50.00. Tour and bagged lunch will be \$30.00. Tour only will be \$20.00. Contact Linda Carpenter at 304-847-2467 for more details.



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Pelican NOT brief!

*– A photo by BBC member
Herb Myers of the very rare
American White Pelican that
was discovered in February near
Willow Island Dam north of
Parkersburg. Everybody got to
see the bird up-close during the
Early Spring Meeting.*

WHAT’S INSIDE

Editor’s Message 1
Message From Our President..... 1
To Our Friend, Bill Thompson..... 1
Early Spring Meeting Has Great Birding.....2
2018-19 WV CBC Reports3-4
WV First Birds of 2019 4
WV Breeding Bird Atlas Needs Bird Photos 4
Member Obituaries - Dottie Sanders and Don Shearer 5
French Flamingo by Norma Venable..... 6-7
Correspondence 7
Wallace Hoffmann Passes 7
12th Annual Spring Eagle Survey Results..... 7
Interesting Sightings Around The State..... 8-9
Rare Bird Notes 9
Changes In Contact Information..... 10
Chapter Happenings/Nature Happenings..... 10-11