



THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA
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OCTOBER–NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2019

RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

Editor's Note



Brian M. Wargo

Fresh off a successful fall meeting at Blackwater Falls State Park, where we had good birds and better speakers, we're happy to announce the spring slate of attractions for our North Bend Meeting!

Jeff Gordon is the president of the American Birding Association. There is very little about birds, birding, and birders that he doesn't find fascinating, though he's especially interested in birding culture and the many ways we all communicate our passion for birds.

Brian M. Wargo will be presenting *Hawkwatching: An Ocean in the Sky* at the Early Spring Meeting at North Bend State Park. Wargo is the author of *"Bird!": An Exploration of Hawkwatching*, which attempts to explain the lure, culture, and the birders that get sucked into staring



Jeff Gordon

at the sky. Wargo is a director of the board for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA), where he chairs the Education and Conservation Committee as well as the Data Committee.

It's never too early to think about Foray! From June 5-13, 2020, we will congregate at Camp Galilee on the shores of Terra Alta Lake in Preston County. Good programs are planned, and there should be good birds to be had. With the high-elevation birds meandering lower down, the camp grounds should have Yellow-rumped Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Purple Finches and more. Remember to save the date and bring new friends.

With the promise (someday) of winter, it is a good idea to keep your eyes and ears open out there. Though there is not supposed to be an irruption of winter finches this time around, there has been no end to the great and unexpected birds that have appeared

in recent years. From scoters to rare ducks (Long-tailed, Harlequin) to grebes (including Red-necked), the rivers bring us many truants from the north. Remember to check your gulls, as well, as we've had Iceland, Glaucous, Kelp and Great Black-backed.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JANICE EMRICK

The BBC recently returned from another great outing to the Eastern Shore. This trip included the Edwin Forsythe National Wildlife Area wildlife drive and Cape May. You can read all about the trip in more detail in the Mail Bag.

At this time of year our thoughts turn to helping with the Christmas Bird Counts. This is the 120th year for the Audubon Annual Christmas Bird Counts. This program has brought together thousands of participants to tally birds during the holidays and continues to play a significant role in our understanding of avian life. The annual dates are December 14-January 5. How can you help? Check the Mail Bag or our website for dates for your local area and contact the coordinator for more details. It's a great way to gather data and contribute to science.

I want to thank all the BBC officers and Board members and others for their help within the last two years. This is my last message as President, as the highly capable Cindy Slater will be taking over the reins for the next two years. Happy holidays and may you have great birding in the New Year!

— Janice Emrick, BBC President

Feeders have brought Lark Sparrow and Painted Bunting; fields and grit piles present places for Lapland Longspur, Red Crossbill and Snow Bunting; and the highlands can hide Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk and Northern Harrier (or Goshawk).

2019-2020 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Athens/Princeton

Saturday, December 28, 2019
Ron Canterbury - 513-556-9570
roncanterbury@aol.com (best)

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

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Larry Helgerman - 412-508-0321

Canaan/Tucker Co.

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Casey Rucker - 304-866-4004
autoblock@frontiernet.net

Charles Town

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com

Charleston

Saturday, December 14, 2019
Doren Burrell - 304-553-8592
g.immer@doren.net

Elkins Area

Thursday, January 2, 2020
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Franklin/Pendleton County

Thursday, December 19, 2019
Fred Atwood - 703-242-1675
fredatwood@yahoo.com

Hampshire County

Saturday, December 28, 2019
Vini Schoene - bcws2@earthlink.net

Huntington

Saturday, January 4, 2020
David Patick - 304-633-4450

Inwood

Saturday, January 4, 2020
Bob Dean - 304-671-4995
bobdean52@gmail.com

Lewisburg

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Larry Davis
Benjamin Handley
304-646-0602
ben@potteryalley.com

McDowell County

Saturday, December 21, 2019
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Moorefield

Saturday, December 14, 2019
Kyle Rambo
Darrell Good
301-757-0005

Morgantown

Saturday, December 14, 2019
LeJay Graffious - 304-379-7505
lejaygraffious@gmail.com

Oak Hill

Sunday, December 29, 2019
Hilary Jones
Hjones1336@yahoo.com

Ona

Saturday, December 14, 2019
David Patick
304-633-4450

Parkersburg/Wood Co.

Saturday, December 28, 2019
Jeanette Esker
304-863-8765

Pipestem Area

Saturday, December 14, 2019
Jim Phillips - 304-466-1275
jimandjudyphillips@gmail.com

Pocahontas County

Saturday, December 14, 2019
Rich Bailey - 703-307-1790

Raleigh County

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Allen Waldron - 304-573-3247
awaldron@suddenlink.net

Wheeling

Wednesday, December 18, 2019
Larry Helgerman
412-508-0321

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

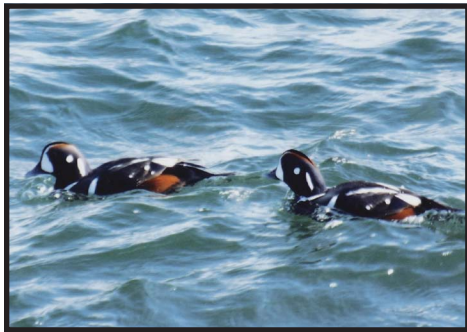
2019 BBC EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT

Twenty-nine BBCers checked into our comfortable Spray Beach hotel during the afternoon and evening. Everyone was on their own for supper. A few of us went out on the beach after dark to see the moonlight on the waves and listen to the swish-hush of the incoming surf, Lovely!

Some of the group were out on the beach again this morning to greet the glorious red sunrise. A few gulls were on the sand and lines of scoters and gannets flew by, black against the sunrise. Breakfast was at seven in the hotel this morning. It was the first get-together of the whole group as people didn't all arrive at the same time yesterday.

Our first destination this morning was Cedar Bonnet restoration area. This is a new stop for our group. Here, on a small raised area of the marsh, trees, flowers and shrubs have been planted for food and cover. The trees were mostly hardwood seedlings and not very large yet. At this time of year, it was not as pretty as I know it would have been in summer. We found a very few birds in the cover, none on the beach and a few far out on the water. It will be interesting to see how this area develops. Then on to Barnegat where we saw Brown Pelicans, an oystercatcher and in the small wooded area, quite a few Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Lunch was at Edwin Forsythe Wildlife Refuge. After a look-around in the visitors center, we drove around the marsh loop, finding more birds. New here were White Pelicans, four Snow Geese, Peregrine Falcons, (one of which seemed to be injured,) a Northern Harrier, Dunlin, yellow-legs and plovers. A large flock of peeps flying past disappeared when their backs were turned and flashed white as they turned their fronts towards us. A few Wood Ducks and Mallards were spotted in a small pond as we left the reserve.



Harlequin Ducks - Rosie Campbell

The group ate at various places, some stopping along the way back to the hotel. Most of us look forward to the seafood here we don't often get at home. Our evening foray on the beach was overcast with threatening gray clouds low over the horizon.

After a good breakfast at the hotel, we drove about two hours to catch our boat near Cape May. It was chilly and windy, but everyone dressed for it. Our pontoon boat was a "scenic cruiser," called The Osprey; a light boat with a glass-windowed top. Captain Bob drove the boat and Vic was our bird guide. Most of us took shelter from the wind by riding inside.

Motoring along the rocky jetties, we found large rafts of Brant, loons, many cormorants, gulls, egrets, and had a good look at some oystercatchers. Because of distance and the motion of the boat, photography was difficult. I'd like to have gotten a picture of a Ring-billed Gull on a pier, struggling with a very large crab. We went on to the hawk watch area at Cape May and had just climbed up on the observation deck when a splendid Golden Eagle went over! A great look! Later, a Bald Eagle put all the ducks in the air for a bit, then flew on. Among the ducks here were Black, Mallard, Ruddy, American Wigeon, and we found one Eurasian Wigeon. Song and House Sparrows,



Great Egret and Little Blue Heron - Rosie Campbell

Yellow-rumps and juncos darted along the reedy shore line. A Belted Kingfisher posed on the railing long enough for picture.

After a stop at the conservation center, it was on to Higbee beach. It was very windy and chilly there. We saw a Bald Eagle and the shells of some large horseshoe crabs. The group had supper at various places on our way back to the hotel. Tired, we had an early evening.

After breakfast and picking up our box lunches, we were off to Barnegat. Right away, a couple of Harlequin Ducks were spotted. They led us on a wild duck chase along the boardwalk, diving again and again before anyone could catch up to them. Some of us persevered far down the jetty and finally caught up to them for a photo.

Brown Pelicans, Forster's Tern and a few other shore birds were spotted. A walk into the little pine forest got a few



American Oystercatcher - Rosie Campbell

more passerines for our list. We are usually not here on Saturday when the light house is open, so today a few of us took the opportunity to climb the 277 steps to the top. A cardiovascular workout!

For lunch, we drove to another new place, "The Bridge to Nowhere." It was aptly named. After bumping along a stretch of dreadful pot-holed road, we arrived at the half-burned bridge, far out in the marsh. A few swans were seen on the way, but none at the ruined bridge. We had lunch here and took a group photo of the whole gang.

The rest of the afternoon was taken up by brief stops at various places. Northern Forsythe Observation Center, etc.

Continued on page 4

EASTERN SHORE TRIP REPORT *Cont. from page 3*

We found grebes, a Cooper's Hawk and some small passerines, then drove back to the hotel for our banquet supper. At six we gathered in the hotel dining room for our choice of three fine selections. The food was good, the fellowship great. We finished the evening with our bird list of 111 species. We all felt the event had been a fine success, ably led by Cindy Slater.

Some of us were on the beach again early to enjoy the pink and gold sunrise and bid good-bye to the ocean most of us won't see again till next year. Wilma got one more bird for our list, a Long-tailed Duck. Our last meal together was breakfast at the hotel. After eating we lingered talking a bit and saying "have a safe trip home" to all our good friends. 'Til next time!



2019 Eastern Shore birding troupe - photo by Cindy Slater with Lee Miller's camera.



Brown Pelican



Eurasian Wigeon



Bald Eagle



Lesser Black-backed Gull



Peregrine Falcon



Boat-tailed Grackle



Tri-colored Heron



Golden Eagle



Harlequin Duck

*Written by Rosie Campbell
Photos above by Neal Hohman*

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

HAPPY HOLIDAYS! – ENJOY INTERVIEWS WITH PAST GUESTS



JIM McCORMAC INTERVIEW – <http://jimmccormac.blogspot.com/>

What were your impressions of the Brooks Bird Club during our Early Spring Meeting? A vibrant and engaged group, lots of laughs and fun. Everyone was very nice to me, and made me feel welcome. I was honored to be a part of an organization with such a long and storied history.

After thirty years of nature study and education, what are your plans for the future? Thanks for asking. Much of my current efforts are in the realm of photography. I try to get out and shoot two or more times a week. After many, many years of doing this, I have an archive of tens of thousands of images, mostly natural history subjects. I am at work on creating a website that will showcase these. Also have several book projects in the works, and as always many speaking and guiding gigs.

What are some good places in eastern Ohio for nature exploration? A personal favorite is The Wilds in Muskingum County. I think most Brooks Bird Club members know the place well. Fantastic at all seasons, and about the only Ohio locale one can go in winter and have reasonable

expectations of golden eagle. Breeding bird diversity is great, too. Lesser known but also great birding is another vast reclaimed strip mine, Tri-Valley Wildlife Area, also in Muskingum County. Any Ohio River access point can bear fruit. The river is not well birded, and can produce interesting birds, particularly in migratory periods and winter.

We had the American White Pelican during our meeting field trip. What other birds (or insects) of interests did you have since then? There have been too many to list, so I'll just mention the last: Limpkin. Who in the world would have predicted a Limpkin would appear in Ohio, let alone (probably) four individuals! One of them is still hanging around as of this writing (November 25) at Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge along Lake Erie. I spent several hours watching and photographing that bird recently. It was catching snails, although not the apple snails of Florida and elsewhere in its normal haunts. What triggered a northward incursion of this largely nonmigratory species is anyone's guess.

How many Christmas Bird Counts will you participate in this year? Probably five, as most years. One is at the aforementioned The Wilds. I started helping on CBC's as a little kid, and after this year's season, will have done about 110 counts thus far. That's a far cry from the Ohio record-holder, Ernie Limes, who helped with a staggering 269 bird counts! I'm not sure I or anyone else can live long enough to eclipse Ernie's amazing milestone! More important than personal records, though, is the sheer volume of data spanning over a century that's been generated by these counts. I'm happy to be a part of such an effort.



FRANK IZAGUIRRE INTERVIEW

What were your impressions of the Brooks Bird Club? Everyone I met was kind, gracious, fun, and loved birds. What more could anyone want from new birding friends? Getting to spend time with the Brooks Bird Club was an extremely special experience.

You gave a very interesting program on birding guides. Do you have plans to write your own book someday? Yes, I would like to publish my dissertation research as a book. First, I need to finish the dissertation and defend, and then I can focus on shaping the work into a book. Then, the task becomes convincing someone to publish!

What makes Blackwater Falls and that area so enticing for you? One thing that will always be special to me about Blackwater was when I had the chance in 2012 to hear Chan Robbins talk and then meet Ted Floyd right afterward, especially considering Ted has become an important person in my life and one of my best friends. My wife Adrienne and I returned on our own in June of 2015

and also had a terrific time finding many of the area's fantastic breeding birds, including a singing Blackburnian warbler and winter wren just outside the lodge, as well as other neat critters like my first-ever encounter with a badwing, now one of my favorite moths. But there is something that goes beyond my own experiences or what animals can be found there: Blackwater is a place that is beloved by many people, and I am the kind of person who believes that love circulates through the place itself and back to the people who are drawn to return. It is the kind of place that when you are there, you can think to yourself—I am here—and that itself feels wonderful.

You joined the BBC at the end of the fall meeting. What led you to that decision? Well, really it was an overdue action, but the Fall Retreat did make it even clearer that Brooks Bird Club is a great club filled with excellent people. I look forward to reading the newsletter and hopefully attending some events.

Any birding trips planned, and where would you most like to bird? We usually visit my parents in Miami during winter break, which has good birding in December, so we'll probably do that this year and maybe stop somewhere along the way to do some birding en route, like St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge near Tallahassee, which is another phenomenal birding area. I have never birded the Lower Rio Grande Valley and Adrienne and I have been scheming about how we can get down there. That will probably be our next big birding trip whenever we can sneak it in!

2019 BBC FALL REUNION A SUCCESS

Three dozen BBCers and speakers arrived at the beautiful Blackwater Falls State park on October 18, 2019. We were promised a wide variance in weather, and we luckily started out with sunshine.

First up was a board meeting for a number of the participants, while others got moved in and had a little time to walk the grounds or to visit with old friends. Dinner was in the main restaurant, and was good. The expansive glass windows there never fail to show off a beautiful scene.

After our meal, we congregated in our meeting room for a program by Frank Izaguirre, who is a doctorate student at WVU. Frank spoke about his dissertation on the evolution of the field guide and how they have helped us to become better birders and naturalists. He covered early bestiaries, past authors, and more modern revolutionaries such

as Peterson. The program was very well received, and Frank breathed great life into his subject. While we all were enjoying his attendance, Frank and his wife, Adrienne, were joining the BBC. A big 'welcome' to them!

Overnight, a hard frost set upon our cars, so there was much scraping and heating before we drove off to meet Casey Rucker at the bridge in Davis for an early morning bird walk to the wastewater settling ponds. We had around 20 species, including 20+ Wood Ducks, three ravens, and 14 mixed blackbirds. A mink was also spotted gamboling across the far walkway of the pond.

After a hot, filling breakfast at the lodge restaurant, many of us went on a leaderless outing to Canaan Valley. The Freeland section of the refuge had a harrier, many Swamp Sparrows, Common Yellowthroat, a catbird and more. Four

of us walked Abe Run in the state park and had flocks of Yellow-rumps, Red-breasted Nuthatches, a Blue-headed Vireo, kinglets, and a creeper. After lunch at the lodge, we had a Merlin flying over.

On Cortland Road, some of us had a Vesper Sparrow and three Palm Warblers. Another group of BBCers went over towards Moorefield, and they added Black Vulture, Bald Eagle, sapsucker, Tree Swallow and Killdeer. Overall, the club had 65 species for the weekend.

Upon returning to Blackwater, Nathan Pieplow did a workshop on how to use cell phones to identify bird songs and calls. He showed examples of a number of websites and apps to use to help learn the best ways of 'reading' vocalizations.

A banquet dinner with special treats (thanks to Jeanne B. and Cindy S.), and then Nathan Pieplow's evening presentation on the world of bird song and sound, and how that all contributed to his books from the Peterson series, "Field Guide(s) To Bird Sounds". Everyone had great questions to ask afterwards, with some exclaiming that it was their favorite BBC program in memory.

After a nightcap and a night's nap, we awoke to rain. Birds were counted from the front door before breakfast. Afterwards, a membership meeting and then departure. Thanks to everyone for attending and making the weekend successful and fun!



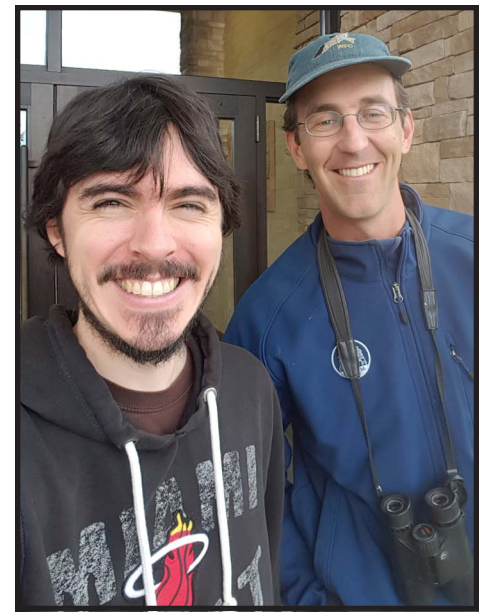
The beauty of the Canaan Valley NWR



Adrienne Izaguirre enjoying the boardwalk



The mists accentuated the fall colors in Blackwater Gorge - all photos by Frank Izaguirre



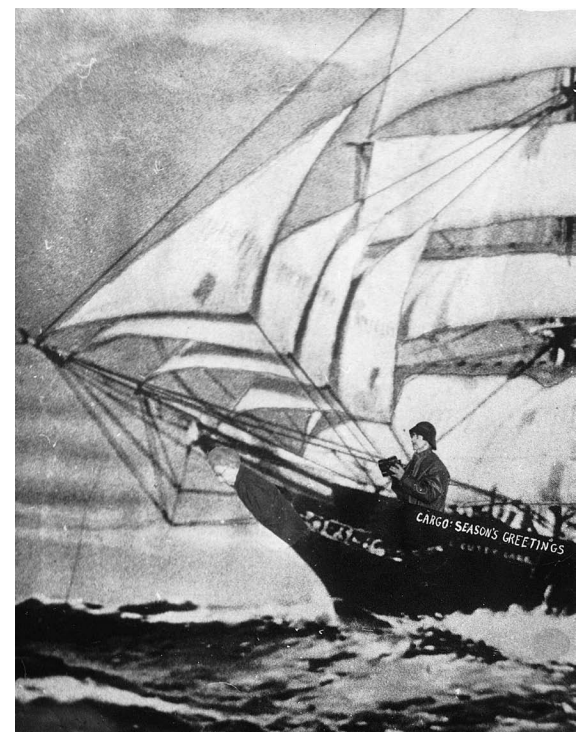
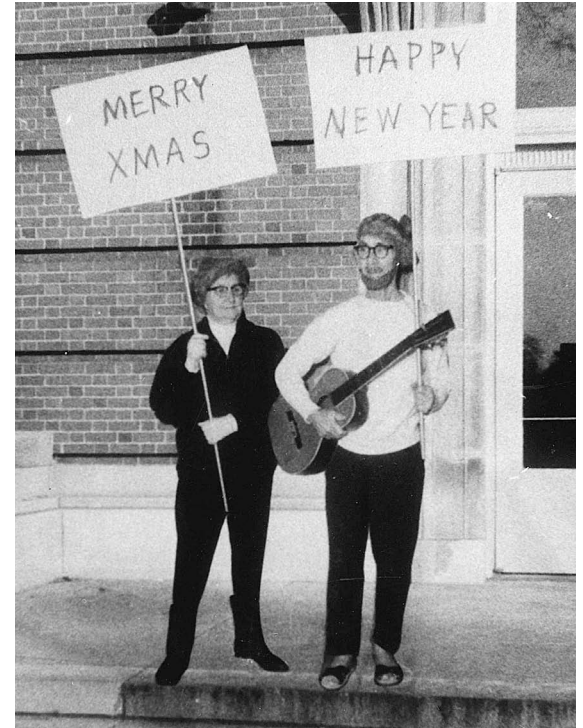
Frank and Nathan enjoyed the trip



BURTT CHRISTMAS CARDS

For many years, longtime BBC member Harold Burtt created his own Christmas cards, featuring cutouts of his wife and himself in humorous spots. Enjoy in good spirit!

Harold's son, Ben, and Ben's family were members for many years. Ben passed away a few years ago. Many remember Ben's son (also named Ben) from his sound work on Star Wars and more.



INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

I have been sleeping on the porch with my old dog who has ligament trouble for the past week. This has given me the opportunity to listen all night for birds. I have heard screech-owls for the first time this year, I only hear them for a couple of minutes at a time, the soft whinny does not carry well, especially in the post shale drilling days. Green Herons call as well during the night. We have had them breeding every year on the backyard pond since we moved here in the early 90's. This year, for some reason I didn't see them until late June. At sunrise along with the normal birds I hear ravens flying over the adjacent hay field. I still can't get used to that; ravens had never been here before. Others heard at daybreak are chickadees, nuthatches, catbirds, robins, phoebes, crows, Blue Jays, Carolina Wrens and a pewee.

– Paul McKay, Ohio County, 8/10/19

While running an errand this morning I was treated to seeing two turkey hens and seven poults along Shenandoah Junction Road (across from TA Lowery Elementary entrance). They were making their way through a mowed area picking off insects and eventually disappearing into a thicket. It is always great entertainment for myself to watch all of these "alert" eyes never missing a thing. At one point, near the edge of the thicket, youngsters were jumping off the ground and picking morsels off the shrubs and brambles.

– N. Wade Snyder, Shenandoah Junction, 8/10/19

Tonight, the sky was clear, no wind and a 76 pleasant degrees F. I brought my walking partner/neighbor, who is not a birder, with my husband and I, to watch the swifts. For the last two months, my neighbor has been patiently listening to me point out birds every evening as we walk (probably yawning and rolling her eyes). We've seen Chimney Swifts many evenings, but just 2-4 on average. She was born in Peru, and when I explained where these tiny fast-flying birds migrate to, she couldn't believe it. She then became more interested. Tonight was going to be a big surprise for her. I told her we were going to see the swifts roost, and I would have her home in less than one hour.

Things happened a lot quicker tonight compared to last evening. It was noticeable that the days are getting shorter by minutes each day. When we were near the Charles Town post office, the smaller flock of swifts that seemed to have its own roost, were still there. I wanted to observe both areas, but it was more important to show my neighbor the big surprise yet to come. I couldn't wait to share the experience with her.

As the momentum of the flock started to build around the chimney, the pattern of birds tightened, and the aerial spiral of swifts started to form a nice circle going counterclockwise. A fire engine was responding to an alarm, and the loud siren less than a block away, scared the birds. They went in all directions away from the chimney, were a bit chaotic for a minute or two, then they returned to their aerial circle. She agreed that they looked like a toilet bowl flushing.

This evenings observation of the Charles Town post office Chimney Swift roost was achieved in 7 magical minutes. The first Chimney Swift entered the chimney at 7:47 PM, and the last entered at 7:54 PM. An amazing 705 Chimney Swifts entering the chimney tonight!

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 9/10/19

We have been working on various projects around our place that have kept us close to home and waiting on phone calls. It all paid off to day thanks to the birds and dragonflies.

At 6:15 a.m., I stepped out on the porch in time to hear a pair of great horned owls talking to each other. At 8 a.m., I decided to make breakfast when I noticed small birds flitting around in our white birch. Binoculars revealed a black-&-white warbler and American red-start.

By this time, Judy had joined me and we watched that tree for the next 2 hours finding Northern Parula, Tennessee, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, Yellow, Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue and Magnolia warblers in a constant stream through the property. The evening before, we had a Cape May Warbler. Other birds this morning included Scarlet Tanager, gnatcatcher, Green Heron and 10-12 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds.

I declared I would become an honorable hard-working citizen again at 10:00. Then the call of a red-tail caught my attention. Two red-tails & a Cooper's Hawk were circling. I sat back down on the porch. By noon, we had seen 48 broad-wings and 1 American Kestrel.

An appointment in Princeton and some errands caused us to be gone from noon-3p.m. When we came home, as soon as Judy sat down on the porch, she had a kettle of broad-wings, 60 in number. We watched until 6 p.m and added another 12 broad-wings, 2 Bald Eagles, one Sharp-shinned Hawk and an Osprey.

The last time we made the hike to Hanging Rock Tower in Monroe County we saw one broad-wing. There's something to be said for porch sitting.

– Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 9/18/19



Connecticut Warbler at Ohio River Islands NWR Visitor Center – photo by Michael Schramm



Marsh Wren at Green Bottom WMA Boardwalk – photo by Josh Holland

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS (con.)

Derek Courtney and I ventured down to the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory in Dolly Sods this morning. The weather was ideal, and the birds were moving. We counted a total of over 3,000 passerines moving along the front, and the volunteers at the banding station reported ~400 birds caught. Warblers were zipping past within feet of us, and dozens could be seen flying through the air at a time. There were also good movements of migrating tanagers (mostly Scarlet, but we saw one Summer) and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. No real raptor movement, which wasn't a surprise given the westerly winds, but we did see two American Kestrels.

At the banding station, we were also treated to a close-up look at a Brewster's Warbler that had been caught and processed.

Later, while hiking the Blackbird Knob trail, we had a nice little feeding flock surround us, featuring spectacular, eye-level looks at Cape May Warblers and Black-throated Blue Warblers almost within touching distance. Plus good views of Northern Parula, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, and Red-breasted Nuthatches.

– Hannah Clipp, Morgantown, WV, 9/21/19

Fourteen raptor watchers (ranging in age from four to seventy!) joined us on the main overlook at Cooper's Rock State Forest this afternoon to look for migrating hawks, vultures, and whatever else flew past. Highlights included more than 80 Cedar Waxwings, at least 39 Turkey Vultures, 8 Red-tailed Hawks, 5 Black Vultures, 3 Common Ravens, 2 Cooper's Hawks, and one immature Bald Eagle. We also saw a handful of Monarch Butterflies, several dragonflies, cicadas, many dogs, one drone, and a wedding. It was a gorgeous day to be on the overlook!

– Katie Fallon, Morgantown, WV, 9/22/19

Over the years, we have had soon interesting birds pass through our area that I could see or hear in or from our yard. These birds have included five owl species (E. Screech-owl, Great Horned, Barred, Long-eared and N. Saw-whet), a few Bald Eagles, a Golden Eagle flyover, American Woodcock, Chuck-wills-widow, Dickcissel, and Canada, Swainson's and Mourning Warblers to mention just a few. But I got a real surprise Tuesday morning.

I had taken our two Golden Retrievers into the back yard one more time before we headed for work. Our older retriever Bonnie wandered up into a large patch of cone flowers, blackberry lilies, a butterfly bush and a few roses at the southwest corner of our fenced in back yard. As I watched her walk along the edge and into this thick plant area, a Sora flushed out, flew about 15-20 ft., dropped to the ground and ran under the gate of our fence and out of the back yard! Both of our dogs immediately ran to the gate, as I did, but the Sora was nowhere to be seen. Needless to say, that was one bird I never expected to add to my "yard" list. But as Leon Wilson used to say, "Birds are where you find them". My guess is that it was migrating, got tired and looked for somewhere to rest. Our patch of thick vegetation apparently fit the bill until Bonnie flushed it.

– Gary O. Rankin, Lavalette, WV, 10/17/19

My pond fish are going through their seasonal slowdown, approaching torpor, which is how they survive the winter. Their lack of movement attracted a Cooper's Hawk to the pond. A most ingenious maneuver for the hawk was to stand on a large "floating" rock and try to catch lethargic fish.

The "floating" rock sits on cinder blocks in the middle of the pond and gives the appearance of it floating. Fish can swim through the cinder blocks and also hide underneath the rock.

It's a bit comical to see a Cooper's Hawk standing on a big rock in the middle of a pond. The bird left its guano mark on the rock, then gave up and flew away without dinner. Nice try anyway!

Waiting for the return of the heron to do seasonal population thinning.

– BIRDMOM, Jefferson County, WV, 10/23/19

– *Sightings taken from WVBird ListServ*



Bright Blue-winged Warbler at AFMO –
photo by Frederick Atwood

WEST VIRGINIA YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

Are you under age eighteen, and are you interested in learning more about our state's amazing birds? Then the West Virginia Young Birder's Club may be the place for you! Our mission is to promote a healthy lifestyle through birding while encouraging an appreciation for West Virginia's native wild birds and Appalachian ecosystems. We host bird walks and other events in cooperation with other organizations and groups, and eventually we plan to host an annual conference. We are open to kids (and parents, and supporters) of all ages, although some events may be age-specific. Check back here often for updates!

The West Virginia Young Birders Club is a project of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, a 501c3 nonprofit organization based in Morgantown, WV.

For more information about the West Virginia Young Birders Club, please contact Katie Fallon: katie@accawv.org, or go to <https://wvybc.org>.



CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

NEW MEMBERS

Wayne Carey
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CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

HANDLAN CHAPTER

Dec. 16, 2019 – 6:00 pm, Christmas get-together and preparation for the Holiday Bird Count.

HEADQUARTERS CHAPTER

Meet at the Schrader Environmental Center in Oglebay Park.

Dec. 17, 2019 – Christmas party, with doors opening at 6:00 pm. Dinner will be at 6:30. Bring a covered dish and table setting. After dinner, we'll have a Christmas Quiz and then our gift swap, \$5 limit.

MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

Dec. – Lucine Wright 740-373-6230

Dec. 12, 2019 – Ohio River, Little Hocking area, 9:00 am, Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7; bring lunch.

Dec. 19, 2019 – Middle Island area, 9:00 am, Burger King, Rt. 68 & I-77. Bring lunch.

NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

Dec. 11, 2019 – 7th Annual 'Souper' Bird Walk, 9:30 am-12:00 pm. Join Deb Hale as she welcomes winter with her walk in Harpers Ferry!

This year's bird walk will take place on Virginus Island. The walk will cover mostly-level terrain along the wetlands area of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (beside the Shenandoah River), and then loop around the circumference of Virginus Island, which includes wooded paths and waterfront areas.

Participants will meet in the parking lot at the intersection of Shenandoah Street and Route 340 at 9:30 a.m. Please note that parking in this lot requires a National Park pass or payment of the entrance fee. Please register on the PVAS website.

Dec. 18, 2019 – 'Third Wednesday' Bird Walk at Cool Spring Preserve, 7:00-10:00 am. This event is free and open to the public; however, registration is strongly encouraged. Please register online. Join Beth Poole on her regularly scheduled bird walk at Cool Spring. The trails have a lot to offer! From well maintained foot paths to gorgeous views, the preserve's 12 acres is home to much wildlife. Please meet in the front parking lot of the Preserve.

www.potomacaudubon.org

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

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



NEW RIVER BIRDING & NATURE FESTIVAL

April 27 – May 2, 2020
www.birding-wv.com

Since 2002, the annual New River Birding & Nature Festival takes place in and around the New River Gorge National River in West Virginia. Not far from home. The Festival highlights a variety of daily birding excursions, rich with the plant life and wildlife.

Since the Festival's inception in 2002 as a non-profit fundraising event powered by volunteers, proceeds support the 501C3 Fayette County Education Fund, Inc.'s student environmental and leadership training programs in Fayette County, WV, benefiting thousands of young people and their communities.

At this Festival, you won't find rows of vendor tables and advertising. You will find dinner tables with all kinds of folks from all sorts of places of every skill level who enjoy exploring, learning and sharing the phenomena of living things - from those that fly to those that grow in dirt. Every day offers a great field trip, tasty meals, knowledge packed and fun presentations, world-class trip leaders, and good times with old and new friends. Participants must register in advance. Packages vary. Details are at www.birding-wv.com.



BROOKS BIRD CLUB EARLY SPRING MEETING

MARCH 6-8, 2020

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. Our evening speakers and co-participants will be ABA President Jeff Gordon and Allegheny Front Hawkwatch compiler Brian Wargo. They will be interesting, and fun to bird with.

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.

As last 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 still have lunch at the dining room on Sunday but you will have to pay for it separately.

Deadline for reservations is January 31, 2020

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

Richard Esker
104 Wellesley Dr.
Washington, WV 26181

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

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



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“Drawing” from the archives
– *The BBC archives contain a series of Christmas cards that Harold Burt created long ago. Enjoy more on page 7!*

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