



# THE MAIL BAG

A PUBLICATION OF THE BROOKS BIRD CLUB OF WEST VIRGINIA  
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THE ORNITHOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY OF WEST VIRGINIA

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RYAN TOMAZIN - EDITOR

## Editor's Note

2025 sees new presidential leadership for the Brooks Bird Club in the personage of Sally Egan of Bridgeport, WV. I've known Sally since she joined the club nearly seventeen years ago. I know her to have a sharp and thoughtful mind, and I believe she will have successful presidency, and, I hope, a reasonably peaceful one. We'll all do our best to make that a reality, I'm sure!

Sally presided over our Early Spring Meeting at North Bend State Park in Ritchie County. As the Club continues to transition to new strategic means and updated financial procedures, a number of things were discussed for the good of the Club. You, member, can rest assured that a variety of voices are inspecting the brickwork and testing the floorboards, so to say, in every effort to strengthen the structure of the BBC and to protect and enrich its members. Just remember, this can't happen without support and effort from the membership. Whether by joining the Board, lending your opinions by correspondence, or participating in our scientific efforts at Foray and beyond (a VERY important thing, at present), you are critical in the success of your group, especially in the face of heightened environmental change. Thank you in advance!



I don't often look to discuss my own exploits in-depth in the Mail Bag, but I've also ended my 16th year as your Mail Bag Editor, and I long ago ran out of colloquial thoughts about a lot of things to do with birding and nature in relation to the BBC. With that in mind, here are notes from the North Country, on birds I've been grateful enough to see in the past five months of living just south of Minneapolis, Minnesota, just minutes from the MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

In late October, two days after I arrived, the Refuge area yielded to me a northern shrike, my first of hundreds of trumpeter swans, sandhill cranes. A week later, it was a Ross's goose, followed soon after by 250 white pelicans on the Mississippi River. Three Christmas counts yielded good birds, including one of many merlins I've had here. Christmas at Sax-Zim Bog lent me clouds of common redpolls and white-winged crossbills. A Christmas morning lifer great gray owl was a present, with black-billed magpie, northern shrike, and evening grosbeaks brought joy.

January brought a 2nd state record mottled duck, just a mile and a half from my apartment. My first time watching the

local dump for eagles netted at least 70; the second trip found 160 or more bald eagles. Astounding!

In February, 300 Lapland longspurs in a field, followed by a pair of red-headed woodpeckers in a forest park. Another shrike. 30 white-winged crossbills just up the road from me, in a cemetery that moments later hosted a merlin for me.

And learning at North Bend in March that a pygmy nuthatch, another 2nd state record, was at a park in St. Paul, a bird I got to see soon after, while four cranes flew overhead. Whew!

## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT, SALLY EGAN

The Brooks Bird Club is now in its 93<sup>rd</sup> year with hopes that it will continue far into the future. A BBC Strategic Planning Committee, along with the Board of Trustees, has been developing ideas to move us forward into the future in the areas of education, knowledge, communications, and science. Stay tuned for exciting news from this committee. We all have our own story as to how we became members of this amazing club. I learned about the Brooks Bird Club in a Fairmont Master Naturalist class taught by the late Sue Olcott, WVDNR Wildlife Biologist. Sue stated that a good way to learn more about birds was to join the Brooks Bird Club and so I did. Since joining in 2008, I have not only learned more about birds, but also gained an appreciation for all nature. I'd like to hear your stories about how and why you became a member. It is my privilege to serve as your President for the next two years and hope to see many of you at the Camp Pinnacle Foray in June and other events throughout the year. After such a cold and snowy winter, I'm ready for spring migration. How 'bout you?

– *Your BBC President, Sally Egan*



## RHYS RITTER, EARLY MEMBER, PASSES AWAY

It came to our attention recently that Rhys Theophilus Ritter, one of the BBC's earliest members, passed away on September 22, 2022. Born on August 15, 1927, in Wheeling, WV,

Rhys was a teenager when the club was formed, and he spent time at Oglebay learning birds from BBC members. He participated in Forays and other club events until the early 50s, when he moved to New York City to pursue a career in singing. Though he kept his membership for decades, we hadn't seen him until your Editor invited him to the BBC 80th Anniversary at Blackwater Falls State Park in 2012. Turned out, he knew Helen Wylie back in the old days, but they hadn't seen each other in dozens of years. It was wonderful that Rhys attended and got to see the more recent BBC.

He married Mary Francis Baker Ritter in 1951 in New York City, and she preceded him in death in 2009. Brother Charles Lawrence Ritter passed in 2001, and sister Dorothy Marie Ritter Funk passed in 2011. Rhys was laid to rest in Greenwood-Valley Bend Cemetery in East Dailey, Randolph County, WV. He was 95. His funeral service was recorded in full detail, and can be viewed at <https://www.allsaintsepiscopalbayside.org/livestreams/worship/rhys-ritter-funeral/>

– *Compiled by Ed.*



(Left to right) Rhys Ritter, Mary Jones, Elizabeth Etz DeGarmo Chandler Noonan and Dorothy Conrad, at the 1945 Cheat Mountain Foray.

## Former Resident



Rhys Ritter

## New Yorker Guest Artist For Program

Rhys Ritter, bass baritone, will appear with Edouard Nies-Berger in a recital of sacred music at St. James Lutheran church on Tuesday evening under the auspices of the Wheeling Chapter, American Guild of Organists.

Mr. Ritter, son of Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Ritter of Bethlehem, is a student in the music division of the American Theatre Wing Professional Training program in New York City. He is a member of St. James where he sang in the choir for several years. At present he is bass soloist in the choir of the Church of the Messiah and Incarnation in Brooklyn, N. Y., where Mr. Nies-Berger is choirmaster and organist.

Reservations for the recital may be obtained by contacting John Zorian, president of the Wheeling Guild Chapter at St. James church.

## 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  
12025 County Road 11, Apt. 212  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
412-874-0482  
[wwwarblers@hotmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:jslater1120@yahoo.com)

## WEEKEND WANDERINGS AT THE BBC 2025 SPRING MEETING

Laura Ceperley and I met up with Mimi Kibler to squeeze in a couple hours of birding before the Friday night dinner. Our first stop was to see if we could find any red-headed woodpeckers. After scanning the snags in the backwaters of North Bend Lake, we didn't hear or see any. As we were planning our next stop, we looked up and saw a red-tail hawk flying overhead with a stick and watched it land in a nest, high up in a white pine. A few moments later, another hawk landed in the tree adjacent to the nest. Even though we were disappointed in not seeing any woodpeckers, the sighting of this pair definitely made up for it.

On Saturday morning, with box lunches and hand held radios packed, eleven of us left to go birding along the Ohio River Valley. Our first stop was at the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge to view the back feeders and anything that might be flying over the river. The feeders were active with the winter time regulars, including white-throated sparrows, eastern towhees, and we heard a field sparrow while waiting in the parking lot to leave for our next stop. The second stop was at Willow Island Dam but when we got out of our vehicles it was cold and windy so we didn't stay long. We did see a bald eagle fly by, several double-crested cormorants, and buffleheads. A couple of miles down the road we pulled over to look in Sycamore Lake and saw several species of ducks and a LIFER for me, a gorgeous redhead. On the backside of the lake is a great blue heron rookery. We saw at least four herons standing on the nests high up in the trees. It is amazing how they blend into the branching of the leafless hardwood trees. Our next stop was a few miles down the road to a pull off overlooking a small pond. Here we saw more redheads, mallards, Canada geese and my second LIFER of the day, American wigeon. At this time, I was told when you see a LIFER, you are required to buy everyone in your group a piece of pie or ice cream. There were no pie shops close by and ice cream didn't sound very enticing on this cold blustery day. I was off the hook! Before we left this site, there was high drama on the pond. A female redhead had just caught a fish and a male mallard spotted her prize. He chased and tormented her until she gave up her catch. There were mumblings among some in the group toward the rascally mallard that I won't print.

French Creek Backwater had several large rafts of ducks and with the aid of scopes, many species were identified. The highlight of this stop was seeing three juvenile bald eagles, one stayed perched and had a beautiful white breast. With scopes packed and stomachs growling, we stopped and had lunch on Middle Island. The wind had calmed down and the sun was peeping out between the clouds. To stretch our legs, we walked back to a blind for wildlife viewing and were able to spot three great blue herons that were hanging out in a wet area and watched a red-shouldered hawk as it called out.

As we headed back to North Bend State Park, we stopped at Harrisville Lake. There was not much on the water but it was well worth the stop. We got our first spring serenade of wood frogs, spring peepers, and killdeer. We made one last attempt before for calling it a day to locate a red-headed woodpecker. We were skunked again, but there is always next year. Many thanks for those who tirelessly set up their scopes that allowed us to identify those little black blobs floating on the water. Bird watching is always a gift, regardless of how few or many species you may see. The gift is even more special when you can share it with the fellowship of others who feel the same.

– *Respectfully submitted, Amy Hill*

We had a total of 57 species for the weekend, with barred owl, northern shoveler and wild turkey being added after we compiled the bird list on Saturday night. A respectable total.

– *Ed.*

## MARY LOUISE COWEN PASSES

Mary Louise Cowen, 102, of Bellaire passed away on March 22, 2025, at her home in Bellaire Ohio.

Born on October 3, 1922 in Bellaire Ohio, a daughter of the late Martin Wilbur and Mary Olive Coleman Giffin. Mary graduated from Bellaire High School in 1940 and went on to attend Ohio State University, where she pursued her studies with vigor and passion. Her commitment to education led her to a fulfilling career as a Kindergarten Teacher at Bellaire Local School. Alongside her professional endeavors, Mary Louise played an integral role in the operation of the family farm with her beloved husband.

Mary was deeply engaged in her community. She served as a 4H Leader of the Rock Hill Rangers and was an active participant in the Grange. She was a devoted member of the Rock Hill Presbyterian Church and held leadership roles as an Elder, Former Co-Moderator for the Upper Ohio Valley Presbyterian Women and Moderator for the Presbyterian Women of Rock Hill.

Her community involvement was extensive and spanned numerous organizations, including the Presbyterian Women's Association, Bellaire PTA, Child Guidance, Wheeling Women's Club, WCTU, Brooks Bird Club, and the Farm Bureau. She also contributed significantly to the Bellaire Hospital Auxiliary.

Mary was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Henry Cowen on April 17, 2008, an infant sister, Catherine Giffin, sister; Martha Booth, brothers; Wendell and John Giffin.

Survivors include her seven children, twenty grandchildren, twenty-one great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.



*Photo by  
Janice Emrick*

# HOW TO SUBMIT A BIRDING CHECKLIST ON EBIRD

Create a free account and then click on 'Submit' at the top of your screen. This tutorial is for a computer.

**1**

Submit Explore MyeBird Science About News Help Donate

1 2 3 Where did you bird?

Identify the location where you made your observations.

Choose from Your Locations  
Connelly On Eleven (home) Continue

Find it on a Map  
Enter a region

Use Latitude/Longitude  
Create a new location using latitude and longitude.

Select an entire county, state, or country  
If you were birding across a very large area (e.g., an entire state or county) select this option. Please consider using more precise locations when reporting to eBird so that your observations are more valuable for analysis.

Import Data  
Import data from a spreadsheet, database, or birding program. Learn how

Enter your obs. date

Pull-down menu for previous locations

Click to pull up a map for locations

Start time, duration, distance, party size

**2**

Submit Explore MyeBird Science About News Help Donate

1 2 3 Date and Effort Connelly On Eleven (home), Dakota County, Minnesota, US

Observation Date\* Mar 29 2025

Observation Type\*  
 Traveling  
 Stationary  
 Historical  
 Incidental  
 Other

Start Time\* 10:45 AM

Duration\* 10 min

Party Size\* 1

Checklist Comments  
From living room window.

Back Continue

Were you traveling, birding one place, or birds seen otherwise

**3**

Submit Explore MyeBird Science About News Help Donate

1 2 3 What did you see or hear?

Sat Mar 29, 2025 10:45 AM

Groups based on 2 complete checklists for Connelly On Eleven (home)

FREQUENT (10% OR MORE)

- Blackbird, Red-winged
- 1 Cardinal, Northern
- 3 Chickadee, Black-capped
- Crow, American
- Eagle, Bald
- 2 Finch, House
- Goldfinch, American
- Gull, Ring-billed
- Jay, Blue
- Killdeer
- 2 Mallard

Jump to Species  
Enter species name

Taxonomic  
 Show Rarities  
 Show Subspecies  
 Group by Most Likely

Shortcuts  
Preferences

Are you submitting a complete checklist of the birds you were able to identify?  
 Yes  No

Back Submit

Details: What a surprise. A male and female have been on the lawn for the past three hours.

Media: To add media, first save this checklist then go to Add media on the next page. Learn More

Age & Sex: Male 1, Female 1

Enter your birds & any details you like. For rare birds, click the button at right

**4**

Submit Explore MyeBird Science About News Help Donate

All checklists

eBird Minnesota CHECKLIST 5221563588

Sat 29 Mar 2025 10:45 AM

Connelly On Eleven (home) Dakota County, Minnesota, United States

Ryan Tomazin Stationary Complete 10 min

From living room window.

5 Species Observed 11 individuals

AGE & SEX	Juvenile	Immature	Adult	Age Unknown
Male			1	
Female			1	
Sex Unknown				

- 2 Mallard
- 3 Black-capped Chickadee
- 3 House Sparrow
- 2 House Finch
- 1 Northern Cardinal

Submit and see your checklist. Add photos or sound, if captured.

NOTE: If you see a rare bird, or have good notes on where to find something else, PLEASE leave details along with your list!



Next time: How to use iNaturalist

## NOTES FROM ROSIE CAMPBELL

### The annual trip to Killbuck Marsh. Feb. 20-21, 2025

A small, very intrepid group of BBCers set off in the cold for an excellent birding trip. 1-4 degrees and snowing when I left the house Thursday morning. The group met at the McD's in Sugar Creek then went in a small convoy on to the marsh. It has been cold for a good while so we expected there would be lots of ice and maybe not much open water. This proved to be true; so when we did find water, there were lots of ducks, geese and swans.

Our first stop netted a large flock of tundra swans and several kinds of ducks. A few sandhill cranes were nearby, doing synchronized walking and some flying over. At another spot we found a large flock, (over 75 or 80) of cranes, grouped in a low place out of the wind. On this trip I saw more sandhill cranes than all I've ever seen before.

This was also a good trip for raptors. Several eagles and hawks were seen, particularly harriers. At Funk Bottoms, half a dozen harriers were on the ice and flying around while an eagle watched from a tree nearby. Some of the very commonest of song birds weren't seen. This trip usually has a lot of red-winged black birds, the males arriving to claim territories. Not this year. Only a red-wing or two was seen. We did find several kinds of sparrows; white-crowned, white-throated, tree, song, swamp, etc. A rusty black bird and a pipit were with the sparrows. Woodpeckers were seen but not a lot of them, and no short-eared owls.

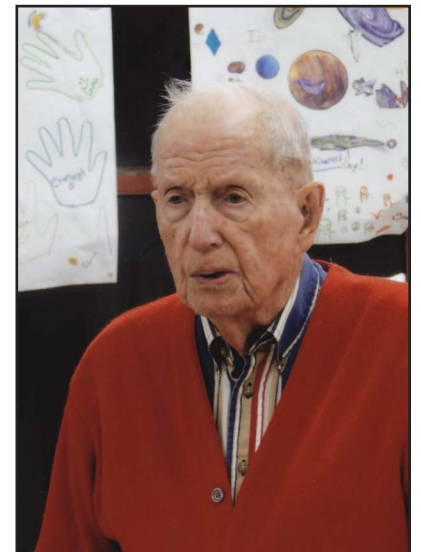
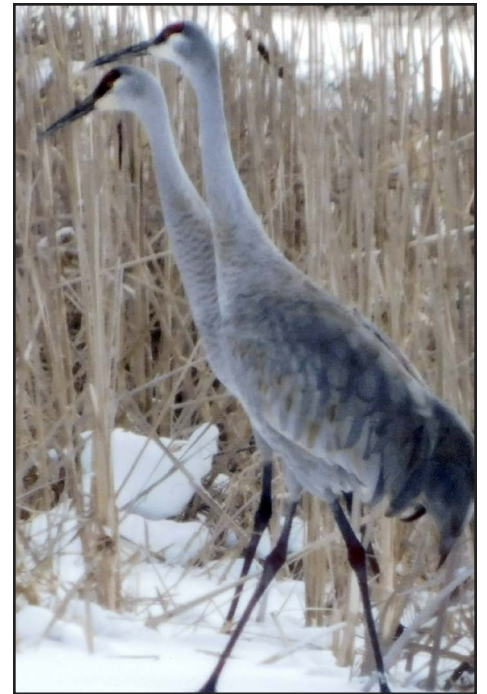
Lunch on Thursday was at the Pine Tree Barn. We stayed at the Q-Inn in Wooster overnight. It was 19 and snowing when we left the hotel Friday morning. It "warmed up" a little later.

One of the best sightings was a very large flock of Canada geese; a cloud of them chased up by an eagle. In the air, they made a tremendous loud clamor, circled and landed in a nearby field. Once they settled, we discovered quite a few greater white-fronted geese among them. Watching the water fowl out on the icy causeways was not for sissies. The wind across the ice was bitter and standing with a scope to find what ducks were present was tough. There were mallards, black ducks, scaup, pintails, gadwall, widgeon, canvasbacks, and more. Three trumpeter swans were spotted among the many tundras.

We had a delicious final lunch at the Homestead Restaurant in Berlin before starting home.

**March 1, 2025** – A few BBCers attended a Wildlife Symposium in New Concord Ohio, sponsored by The Wilds. The several speakers talked on things affected by the ecology of the strip-mined land where The Wilds is located. After the Big Muskie had mined the area and the reclamation was done, the area became a world-wide well known sanctuary and breeding place for several species of endangered wildlife.

Subjects of the lectures varied from rhinos to burying beetles. Other topics were iron and various minerals effects on the health of animals pastured there, both the exotic and native white-tailed deer. Trumpeter swans and wild turkeys were the birds talked about.



*There was fun, good food and hi-jinks at the Christmas party. Senior member Bob Rine quoted "the Night Before Christmas" from memory and for an encore, he quoted "The Cremation of Sam McGee."*

## 2024-2025 WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS

The 53rd Pipestem Area, WV Christmas Bird count was held Saturday, December 14, 2024. 63 species were found for the day. Four species were recorded for count week.

The five most numerous species were common merganser (202), Canada goose (196), European starling (174), dark-eyed junco (150), and American crow (117).

On our first count in 1972 the five most numerous species were dark-eyed junco (349), house sparrow (167), evening grosbeak (131), European starling (114), American crow (94).

Interesting side note, in 1972 we had 73 common goldeneyes (1 in 2024) and 62 horned larks (0 in 2024).

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV

Hi, all! I think I have all the bird data in hand, so I don't think much will change. Looks like we're going to end up with 96 species on count day with an additional 3 species recorded for count week. Both represent the 2nd highest totals we have ever had for a Morgantown CBC.

This was the 2nd time we have recorded both green heron and Ross's goose on a CBC. This was the 2nd time we found marsh wren, and we found 2 different ones. And Lincoln's sparrow was found for just the 3rd time, and again we found 2 different birds.

We set high count records for 13 species: sharp-shinned Hawk, bald eagle, killdeer, northern flicker, pileated woodpecker, American crow, marsh wren, ruby-crowned kinglet, chipping sparrow, white-crowned sparrow, savannah sparrow, Lincoln's sparrow, and American goldfinch. American crow represented our most numerous species with over 1,200 recorded.

Some species, like American robin and yellow-rumped warbler seemed to be around in lower numbers. Was the berry crop lower than normal? Did the cold snap prior move them out of the area? It's unclear to me at this point. Waterfowl were a little scarce, but a fully filled (and legally accessible now) Flegal Reservoir gave us some more productive habitat to scope. Lack of any gull species hurt.

While some sort of bug seemed to keep a good number of our prospective participants at home, many of those pivoted to be feeder counters and still made great contributions. As always, I am truly impressed by the level of participation and commitment we have. Whether it's all-night owling, or community outreach to involve young birders, or someone getting off work and heading out into the field to help ensure we tallied Wilson's snipe, it makes me proud to be involved with this group.

I wish all of you the happiest of holidays, and a healthy and prosperous new year. If all of this sounds like amazing fun, please keep us in mind next year.

– Derek Courtney, Morgantown, WV

The 125th Ona Christmas count was conducted on December 21, 2024, with 21 brave souls dealing with cold temperatures ranging from 28 to 32 degrees and snow showers occurring most of the morning.

We were able to see a total of 65 species which included 5 duck species. We tied the record for red-shouldered hawks with 30 and broke the record for American pipits with 62. Unfortunately, we were unable to find any barred owls, brown creepers and white-crowned sparrows.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

Allen and I held the Raleigh Co. CBC on Monday December 16, 2024. We were supposed to run it on Sunday the 15th, but the weather forecast had us move it to Monday. We ended up with 54 species. It really helps when you have other people to help and cover territories. We are very grateful for everyone's help. Allen and I ended up in Beckley attempting to count the crows on the roost. Again, if you haven't seen a large crow

roost it is worth the trip. For the last few years we have found them off of Ragland Road and the new by-pass in Beckley. We watched from behind Walmart. They absolutely fill every tree on the by-pass side. Deb Beutler was also there to count the crows. We really appreciate her input as this is just an estimate. We put the total at 16,000 birds.

Allen and I held the McDowell Co. CBC on Sunday, December 22nd. Again, we were supposed to go on Saturday, Dec. 21st, but the forecast and appearance of snow had us change it to Sunday. It was very cold Sunday, but the roads were clear of snow. We counted 42 species. Birds were spotty. We'd get several in an area and then zero not too far away.

– Mindy Waldron, Surveyor, WV

On December 28th, 24 people participated in the 125th annual Huntington Christmas Count. It was partly cloudy with temperatures ranging from 45 to 59 degrees. We had a total of 71 species.

We had records highs for common and red-breasted mergansers, wild turkey, yellow-bellied sapsucker and savannah sparrows.

– David Patick, Huntington, WV

The Athens/Princeton CBC took place on December 29, 2024. Four parties of total of six birders in field and with two at a feeder. Rain and wind; numerous species missed, including all blackbirds. There were 53 species and 1,382 birds.

– Ron Canterbury, Cincinnati, OH



## WEST VIRGINIA BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE UPDATE

On March 8, the WV Bird Records Committee convened to review significant bird sightings of 2024 and further back. Spring, across North America, most often conjures up thoughts of migration, with eager birders eagerly awaiting the return of our neotropical migrants. In the non-birder world however, many begin the labors of spring cleaning; tidying up after the cold and snow keep us indoors for much of the winter months. This year's meeting was equal parts evaluating new records and tidying up a few things from the past.

2024 was a really excellent year for bird diversity in West Virginia, a fact which delighted those undertaking some sort of Big Year. Shorebirds in particular really put in a great showing in our state with diversity buoyed by unfortunate drought conditions creating more habitat than we normally see from early spring onward. From a rare bird perspective, things really kicked up in the fall migration period though.

August is usually a time when we can expect some dispersing waders from down south. Last year saw an exceptional record of Tricolored Heron turn up at Marmet Locks in Kanawha County. Richard Gregg spotted this southern species in mid-August while birding one of his favorite local patches. This bird luckily stayed around a few days, allowing several state birders to enjoy its presence. This was the third relatively recent state record, with the most recent prior sighting happening all the way back in 2009. Great find, Richard!

When the weather cooled, the bird finds heated up! Late October saw a gorgeous Western Kingbird grace Harrison County. David Mayle found this western flycatcher hawking insects around the Bridgeport Rec Center. \*Tyrannus\* species can be really tricky to identify at times, but David's photos were so good that the Committee had little difficulty unanimously accepting this record. If only the bird had stayed around longer for others to see; but this one was a one-day wonder.

Later on, in November, Terry Bronson spied a Black-legged Kittiwake just off the Ohio River at the French Creek Wildlife Area in Pleasants County. This is a species that many had been eagerly awaiting to return to the state for many years. The previous record occurred all the way back in 1963 and, unsurprisingly, was also along the Ohio River. This fantastic sighting represents only the third state record with the first reported in 1902! This bird did not linger long and subsequent attempts to re-find it in poor weather were thwarted. Hopefully the 60+ year pattern of recurrence can be shortened with the next one; Ohio River birders... the gauntlet has been thrown down.

And finishing the year with a bang, superstar birders Aaron Graham and Ariella Malfaro came across a Black-throated Gray Warbler at a Grant County hotspot just two weeks before the year ended. This western warbler definitely shows a pattern of vagrancy to the east, but this is only the second time one has been seen in WV. Fantastic photos made this an easy record to accept. Unfortunately, despite really good habitat to hold a bird like this, and effort by many other birders, this one could not be refound either. With luck, the next Black-throated Gray will be more cooperative. Nevertheless, great find Aaron and Ariella!

The Records Committee also received a wonderful presentation on the MOTUS tracking system from Committee Member and State Ornithologist, Rich Bailey. With new towers going up every year, the MOTUS data has real potential to answer scientific questions that have gone unanswered for too long. From a birder's perspective, this can also cast an illuminating light on what species pass through our state unseen. Within the past few years, Piping Plover, Red Knot, and Bicknell's Thrush have all flown over wearing MOTUS tags. I also expect the MOTUS data will give birders our best chance at figuring out where and when to look for Kirtland's Warblers, as a few tagged birds have also made their way through WV on their migration route. Thanks again, Rich!

A few older sightings that had slipped through the cracks were also reviewed and unanimously accepted. Likewise, a pair of previously accepted records were deemed problematic, and subjected to further review. The Committee thanks everyone who took the time to submit reports for evaluation. A full written report of the Committee's actions will be published in a future edition of "The Redstart". You can also check the BRC website: <https://www.brooksbirdclub.org/west-virginia-bird-records-committee.html>

Until recently the criterion for adding a species to the official state list of bird species was to have a specimen preserved in a museum. Today it is impossible to use this criterion since collecting permits are difficult to obtain, and most of the birding community is unhappy with the idea of collecting. See the BBC website for more in-depth information on the BRC submissions received for 2024. I expect the website will be updated within the next few weeks. The Committee extends heartfelt thanks to the Brooks Bird Club and its cooperation with the aforementioned endeavors.

Likewise, the Committee wishes to thank Dr. Gary Rankin and Dr. Jesse Fallon as they complete their 5 year terms of volunteer service on the BRC and rotate off the Committee. As they exit, we welcome Josh Holland and Cynthia Mullens who were elected to serve 5 year terms. Nathan Reese will serve as our alternate member for the coming year. The Committee looks forward to their contributions and appreciates their willingness to serve.

If anyone has any questions, concerns, comments, or thoughts on how the Bird Records Committee can better serve West Virginia and its birding community, please do not hesitate to contact me. Until the next time, then... Thanks for all you do! The BRC cannot function without cooperation from the birding community. 2025 is already off to a bang with a sighting of Harlequin Duck already submitted. Who knows what exciting species will turn up next!

– Derek D. Courtney, WVBRC Chairman

# INTERESTING SIGHTINGS AROUND THE STATE

About 1:30 this afternoon, grackles just seemed to fall out of the sky into my yard. I counted 120 of them...at every feeder, the pond, the yard. By 3:45, there were 190 of them! Needless to say, there is no seed nor suet left.

With regards to the posts of the high numbers of robins by several birders, I am reminded of a similar experience many years ago. We have 8 large winterberry holly bushes in the yard. The temperature was predicted to drop to -16 degrees that night. A huge flock of robins, perhaps 100, arrived in the yard and ate every berry on those bushes.

– Cynthia Burkhart, Ritchie Co., 1/6/25

A half inch of ice on top of 2-3" of snow created a feeding frenzy at our bird feeders after we got rid of the ice on the feeders:

Mourning dove - 12  
 Sharp-shinned hawk - 1  
 Red-shouldered hawk - 1  
 Yellow-bellied sapsucker - 1  
 Red-bellied woodpecker - 4  
 Downy woodpecker - 6  
 Hairy woodpecker - 2  
 Blue jay - 15  
 American crow - 11  
 Carolina chickadee - 8  
 Tufted titmouse - 7  
 White-breasted nuthatch - 2  
 Carolina wren - 1  
 Ruby-crowned kinglet - 1  
 European starling - 17  
 House finch - 8  
 Purple finch - 9  
 American goldfinch - 23  
 Dark-eyed junco - 17  
 White-throated sparrow - 12  
 Song sparrow - 2  
 Eastern towhee - 2  
 Red-winged Blackbird - 1  
 Common grackle - 2  
 Northern cardinal - 14  
 – Jim & Judy Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 1/6/25

In a Best-Bird-of-the-Year moment, there was a great horned owl calling from close by when I let my dogs out just before dawn. It (I think it was a female, the calls were

high-pitched) was close enough that there were no small birds waiting for seed. It called for a few minutes, even answering me, and then was quiet. I never did see it, but I'm assuming it moved on because the small birds started popping down to the feeder. (Carolina chickadees, titmice, white-breasted nuthatch, juncos, doves, red-bellied and downy woodpeckers, cardinals, white-throated and song sparrows, and towhees)

What a way to start the day! Good birding, all.

– Bev Delidow, Huntington, WV, 1/7/25

I had my eye on a Bald-faced hornet nest that finally fell off the high tree it was hanging from. First, the papery shell and a week later, the three-tiered innards. Fortunately, I was able to pull off the road and retrieve it. Such fascinating construction. I put it on a small table outside to take photos. Next time I looked, a Carolina wren was checking it out. It was of particular interest to a Downy woodpecker who kept hacking away at it. He returned several times. Maybe there was something edible left in some of those large hexagon shaped cells.

On our dogwalk this morning, I noticed a bird in the big tree in the field. The shape threw me off. The rounded body almost resembled a quail. Turned out to be a Red-shouldered hawk having breakfast. That hunched posture as he was pulling his victim apart sure fooled me. When he was finished, he flew to another limb and showed off his lovely breast color.

Our last snowfall and subsequent low temperatures made for lots of bird activity. Lots of cardinals that were really stunning in the snow. One advantage to living in the country is that the snow stays pristine. Special birds were two adult white-crowned sparrows and one first year bird.

– Bruni Haydl, Jefferson Co., WV, 1/27/25

When the weather gets cold outside, the mice move into our basement. We don't pay much attention to them. This winter, with heavy rains & snow melt our basement has been flooding. The basement mice have decided it is more comfortable to climb the



Mega-rare Black-throated Gray Warbler, found December 17, 2024, Grant Co., WV.

– Photo by Aaron Graham

steps (stay inside) than to go back outside. Maybe predators figure into the picture as well – no owls in the house.

We usually set snap traps when the mice appear upstairs. Recently, we have caught a few. I usually place the dead mice on the graveyard fence off from our end porch. I figured crows, ravens, hawks & owls may enjoy a treat.

This morning, as I heated water for tea Judy pointed out a mouse walking down the hallway. I scooped the critter into a cup and headed to the porch. Not wanting to walk barefoot to the graveyard I tossed it out onto the snow. Immediately, 3 blue jays appeared. They took turns pecking the mouse until eventually it died and the jay flew off with it. This all happened in a matter of minutes.

– Jim Phillips, Pipestem, WV, 2/23/25

– Sightings taken from  
 WVBird ListServ



## MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON – SPRING 2025 OUTINGS

**Apr. 22 & 29, May 6 & 13, 2025** – Bird Hike, WVU Core Arboretum, 7:30 AM–10:00 AM. This local hotspot provides birders with the opportunity to see many Neotropical migrants during spring migration. Meet at the entrance to the Arboretum, near the parking lot on Monongahela Boulevard. Leader: TBD.

**May 3, 2025** – Beginners Bird Walk, White Park, Morgantown, 7:30 AM–9:30 AM. This walk will help beginners with the basics to start bird watching. If participants have binoculars or a birding field guide, they should bring them. Although this walk might go slower than other walks, any level of birder is welcome. The walk will use well-maintained trails that are mostly level. With a pond and woods, participants can expect to see a variety of birds. Meet at the ice rink parking lot, at the end furthest from the ice rink. For more information email janeschclark@gmail.com. Leaders: Jane and Alan Clark.

**May 3, 2025** – Bird Hike, Blackwater Falls State Park, Harold S. Walters Nature Center, Davis, WV, 8:00 AM–10:00 AM. Meet at the Nature Center for an easy 1- to 2-mile stroll on pavement and packed trails. Please dress for the weather and bring water, snacks, and binoculars if you have them. Before heading out, check Facebook or the web for updates as events may be canceled or rescheduled due to inclement weather. Contact leader Laura Ceperley (lceperley@yahoo.com) with questions.

**May 10, 2025** – Raven Rock Trail, Cooper's Rock State Forest, 7:30 AM–10:30 AM. Join Katie Fallon and others for a hike on the Raven Rock Trail to look for warblers, tanagers, vireos, thrushes, and other migrants. This walk will be part of the Morgantown Migratory Bird Day celebration.

**May 10, 2025** – Bird Hike, Beall Tract, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, 8:00 AM–10:00 AM. Meet at the Beall parking lot off Cortland Road in the CVNWR for an easy 1- to 2-mile

stroll along pavement and dirt trails. Before heading out, check Facebook or the web for updates as events may be canceled or rescheduled due to inclement weather. Contact leader Laura Ceperley (lceperley@yahoo.com) with questions.

**May 14, 2025** – Bird Hike, Greene County, PA, Pennsylvania State Gamelands 223, 8:00 AM–10:00 AM. Join leader Nate Rees on a trip to look for spring migrants in an under-birded county. Meet in Pennsylvania State Gamelands 223, off the Kirby exit of I-79 North, just two exits north of Morgantown.

### PRICKETT'S FORT STATE PARK

#### Bird walks –

Saturday April 26, Wednesday May 7, Saturday May 10, Wednesday May 14

All start at 8am, meeting in the visitor center parking lot, bring binoculars.

## UNINTENDED BIRD NEST BOX

Ever thought about all those black boxes on telephone cables? They seem to be multiplying recently as more companies are stringing conventional and optical cable in suburban neighborhoods. We attempted to find out what they were called and their purpose and came up with several possibilities—cable system amplifiers, splice-cases, or drop-wire boxes.

A big problem arises when these boxes do not stay closed and sealed. As such, they make ideal “bird boxes” for invasive species. They are protected from predators and sheltered from the weather. House sparrows and European starlings love these enclosures! We started counting occupied boxes on our morning walks and noted at least four over a tenth of a mile section—three house sparrows (in three consecutive boxes) and a starling in one other. Talk about giving the competition a leg up!

*Contributed by John Northheimer  
and Marjorie Keatley*

## 20<sup>TH</sup> WINTER EAGLE SURVEY

The Winter Eagle Survey was held on January 18, 2025. Congratulations to everyone on completing 20 years of the eagle surveys.

Eagle Brigade of Southern WV (Including Three Rivers Avian Center, Bibbee Nature Club and Hanging Rock Migration Observatory)

Hans Creek Valley – BAEA\* – 1 juvenile. Alderson & Barger Springs – BAEA – 5 (4 adults, one 1½ year bird).

Red Sulphur Springs & Rich Creek Valley Rd. - BAEA- 2 adults.

Athens Lake – BAEA – 1 adult.

Meadow River, Fairview Rd., Blue Sulphur Pike, Lake Tuckahoe & Howard's Creek – BAEA – 8 (7 adults, 1 juvenile).

R.D. Bailey Lake – No eagles.

State Line nest – No eagles.

Bertha – BAEA - 2 (1 Adult, 1 sub-adult).

Mouth of the Bluestone (Pits) – BAEA – 19 (6 adults, 13 immatures).

Rt. 20 Bluestone Lake Overlook – BAEA – 13 (4 adults, 4 1st year, 2 2nd year & 2 4th year).

Bellepoint – No eagles.

Mouth of Madams Creek – BAEA – 1 immature.

Brooks Falls – No eagles.

Brooks Island Overlook – BAEA – 1 adult.

Sandstone – BAEA – 2 sub-adults.

\*BAEA = Bald Eagle

Conditions: 32-46 degrees, winds calm to 5 mph, cloud cover 80-100% with light rain in a.m. 36 participants found 55 Bald Eagles (26 adults, 29 immatures).

*– Contributed by Jim Phillips  
& Mindy Waldron*

## CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

### NEW MEMBERS

Jeffrey Koon  
4112 Coopers Creek Rd.  
Charleston, WV 25312

Mackenzie Leigh Love  
73891 Joetta Pkwy.  
Rayland, OH 43943  
lovemackenzieleigh@gmail.com

Francis L. Tolley  
7305 Dunlavey Ridge Rd.  
Fraziers Bottom, WV 25082

### ADDRESS CHANGES

Jim & Beth Bullard  
325 Kimpton St., #916  
Spring Valley, CA 91977-5810

Ann Lyn & Bill Martin  
17024 Cadbury Circle, Unit 239 E  
Lewes, DE 19958

Don & Marilyn Morton  
266 Baker Ln.  
Charleston, WV 25302

Warren Steiner & Jil Swearingen  
2710 Belleview Ave.  
Cheverly, MD 20785

### TELEPHONE CHANGES

Terry Bronson - 740-336-3752  
Emma Emrick - 419-646-3423  
Jeanette & Richard Esker -  
304-916-4140  
Barbara & Gregory Gage -  
304-652-4349  
Bob & Liz Hostottle - 607-684-0506  
Tom & Debbie Long - 304-667-9167  
Don & Marilyn Morton - 681-205-2156

### EMAIL CHANGES

David & Mary Davenport -  
david3@yahoo.com

Kurt & Kathi Hoffman -  
kurthoffman@gmail.com

Thomas & Nancy Moeller -  
thosjmoel@gmail.com

Don & Marilyn Morton -  
oldsquah2@aol.com

Jack O'Connell -  
jack.thebigtrees@gmail.com

Thomas K. Pauley -  
tkpauley@comcast.net

Dave & Joan Schroeder -  
dlsjes@spectrum.net

Barbara Sciulli -  
barbara.sciulli@case.edu

Deb & Mike Tingley -  
debtingley77@gmail.com

Allen & Mindy Waldron -  
wwwaldron@gmail.com

Dan Walker, Jr. -  
danmwalkerrjr@gmail.com

## CHAPTER HAPPENINGS

*Remember to check on brooksbirdclub.org under the Events/Calendar of Events tab. You'll find dates and times for meetings, outings and field trips.*

*If your chapter or affiliate has events to advertise, contact webmaster Larry Helgerman at brooksbirdclubweb@gmail.com*

### MOUNTWOOD CHAPTER

If you have any questions, call one of these contacts:

<b>Jon Benedetti</b>	304-295-8945
<b>Barb Hohman</b>	740-374-5548
<b>Terry Bronson</b>	740-336-3752
<b>Dick Esker</b>	304-863-8765

**April 17, 2025** – Birds & Flowers, Newell's Run, 8:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown. Bring lunch.

**April 24, 2025** – Ohio Birding Route Trail, 8:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7. Bring lunch.

**April 26, 2025** – Johnson T Janes Park, 8:00am. JTJ Park parking lot, foot of 27th St., Parkersburg.

**May 1, 2025** – Collin's Property, 8:00am. WV Welcome Center, Williamstown.

**May 3, 2025** – Kroger Wetlands, 8:00am. Kroger Wetlands parking lot.

**May 8, 2025** – McDonough Wildlife Refuge, 8:00am. McDonough parking lot.

**May 15, 2025** – Middle Island trails, 8:00am, WV Welcome Center, Williamstown. Bring lunch.

**May 22, 2025** – "The Wilds", Ohio, 7:00am, WV Welcome Center, Williamstown. Bring lunch.

**May 24, 2025** – McDonough, 8:00am. McDonough parking lot, Wildlife Refuge.

**May 29, 2025** – Waterloo/Zaleski/Lake Hope, 7:00am. Park & Ride, OH Rt. 339/Rt. 7. Bring lunch.

**May 31, 2025** – Johnson T Janes Park, 8:00am. JTJ Park parking lot, foot of 27th St., Parkersburg.

**June 5, 2025** – North Bend State Park, 8:00am. Kroger, 7th St. Parkersburg. Bring lunch.

**June 12, 2025** – Mountwood Park, 8:00am. Beach area (near torpedo). Bring lunch.

**June 19–20, 2025** – Canaan Valley NWR, overnight. Details TBA.

## NATURE HAPPENINGS AROUND THE STATE

### POTOMAC VALLEY AUDUBON

PVAS leads many birding trips each year; from local bird walks at locations including the USGS Eastern Geological Science Center and our own nature preserves, to trips farther afield like Blackwater NWR and Delaware Bay.

### LEARN TO BIRD!

Course Instructors: Wil Hershberger, Carol Winckler, Nancy Kirshbaum, Lynne Wiseman

Classroom Sessions:  
Wednesday Evenings  
7:00pm – 9:00pm  
April 2, 9, 16, & 23  
Shepherd University

Field Trips:  
Saturday Mornings  
7:00am – 10:00am  
April 5, 12, 19, & 26  
Locations TBD

\$100/person (PVAS members receive a 10% discount). Registration is required

# BONUS BIRD WEEKEND 4<sup>TH</sup> OF JULY WITH THE BBC

The Brooks Bird Club is having another Bonus Bird Weekend. July 3-6, 2025.

Destination, Blackwater Falls State Park. Space is limited to 16. No camping or travel campers, unless you choose to use the BWF campground and then you are on your own but we could arrange to meet together. It is a lovely cabin with hot showers and flush toilets. The itinerary is very laid back. Blackwater Falls is a great location to use as a base, and our activity options will be endless.

The cost will be \$300.00 per person, plus we will split the cost of food when we get there. (In the past, food cost is roughly an additional \$50.00 a person.) The first official "get together" will be breakfast Friday morning. We will have a bag lunch Friday and Saturday; dinner Friday and Saturday; and breakfast Saturday and Sunday mornings. We will all talk about how fast the weekend went and what a great time we had on Sunday at breakfast, then will pack up and head home. Check in will be anytime after 5pm on Thursday, July 3rd. There will be some light snacks & refreshments provided.

You must be a Brooks Bird Club member to participate. RSVP will be first-come, first-serve basis. Space is limited on this event. RSVP by Monday June 23, 2025. This event is non-refundable.

Send RSVP to Cindy Slater - 125 North Center Street, Bridgeport, WV 26330.  
Contact Cindy at (724-570-8502) to RSVP, with questions, or for more details.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

and limited to 20 participants. The course is open to adults and children 16+.

Birding 101 is a four-week course held in April which includes four classroom sessions on Wednesday evening and four field trips on Saturday mornings. It is tailored for beginning birders, but those looking to enhance their skills are also welcome! We will utilize both the classroom sessions and field trips to teach everything from bird identification and field etiquette to birding techniques and resources. The course is taught by local birding experts who love sharing their knowledge and passion for birds. An impressive collection of images and recordings, many captured by the instructors, enhance the course.

The Saturday morning field trips allow participants to practice skills learned in the classroom. Participants will visit a variety of habitats to observe the bird species found in each. Field trips are held entirely outdoors, so participants should dress appropriately for the weather and be prepared for muddy conditions. Field trips include walking 1-2 miles on trails

of varying terrain (some hills) at an easy pace with many stops to look for birds.

Register at <https://www.potomacaudubon.org/event/birding-101-field-trip-2/>

**April 26, 2025** – Bird and Tree Walk at Claymont Retreat Center, 7:30 AM - 10:30 AM. Join Bill Telfair and Hardy Mason for a morning bird and tree identification walk at Claymont Retreat Center! Free and open to the public. For ages 8 and older. All youth must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is required and limited to 15 participants.

Explore the bird life with others at the Claymont Retreat Center! Both large, older trees near the Claymont Mansion and younger trees and shrubs along the North Fork of the Bullskin Run and Claymont wetland provide excellent habitat for bird life!

**April 27, 2025** – USGS Eastern Ecological Science Center Bird Walk, 7:30 AM - 10:30 AM. Join Bob Dean and Alex Kiser for a morning bird walk! Free and open to the public. All ages are welcome,

though youth must be accompanied by an adult. Registration is required and limited to 10 participants.

Stroll with the birds and other PVAS bird enthusiasts at the USGS center in Leetown! Birders of all experience levels are welcome to join us as we get to know the sights and sounds of our resident birds and some visitors on their migratory paths. The property has a mix of open ponds and woods, with excellent wetland quality and diverse bird species!

**May 10, 2025** – Bird Walk at the Walsh Property (near Charles Town), 7:30 AM - 10:30 AM. Join Karli Rogers and Heather Walsh for a morning bird walk at Heather's property! Free and open to the public. This program is for adults. Registration is required and limited to 15 participants. This program has a minimum of 2 participants.

On this morning bird walk, we hope to see a variety of warblers during their spring migration! Anyone with an interest is welcome to come along, regardless of their birding skills.



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**“Oh, hello!”**

*Otters were encountered at least a couple of times on the Hughes River coming into North Bend State Park and the region. This one was chewing on something it found tasty.*

*Photo by Ed.*

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