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The **REDSTART**

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Wendell L. Argabrite 1941-2016

By Gary O. Rankin

On April 15, 2016, West Virginia lost one of its foremost birders and ambassadors for birding when Wendell (Sonny) Argabrite passed away. Wendell contributed much to the West Virginia birding community over his 60 years of birding and is fondly remembered by several generations of West Virginia birders. A 2016 issue of *The Mail Bag* chronicled many memories that fellow birders had of Wendell and his adventures with them¹.

Wendell's interest in birding started during his time in the Boy Scouts, as one of the Ona troop leaders, Leon Wilson, a knowledgeable naturalist and bird bander, taught Wendell the pleasures of being in nature and studying birds. Wendell joined the Brooks Bird Club and was a frequent participant at the annual meeting and on field trips. He also wrote many articles for *The Redstart* documenting rare bird sightings or discussing population trends.

Wendell was also active in the Huntington Tri-State Audubon Society, leading field trips and giving programs on his many birding adventures around the United States. Field trips could be as close as Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area or as far away as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for winter owls and finches. He often led Delmarva trips for winter gulls, scoters and other seabirds, traveling overnight with his group of bleary-eyed companions to arrive at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel at dawn. These trips were composed of birders from all around West Virginia, not just the Huntington area, and often left fledgling birders wanting to see more new species and sparking their interest in traveling for birding. When the Huntington Audubon group dissolved, Wendell was instrumental in forming the Leon Wilson Chapter of the Brooks Bird Club, and he served as the first president. As was his manner, he encouraged new birders to join him on birding outings and to participate in Audubon and other bird counts.

Another example of his leadership quality came following the passing of long time mentor, Leon Wilson. Leon was the organizer and compiler of the Ona Christmas Bird Count (CBC), and his death left a gap that needed to be filled. Wendell stepped up and took over the Ona CBC and was soon the organizer and compiler for both the Ona and Huntington CBCs. He continued to lead and organize these CBCs and host the round ups at his home with his wife Phyllis until his passing last year.

His knowledge of birds was extensive. He had seen many more than 700 bird species in North America, had seen 313 species in West Virginia, and shares the top West Virginia Big Year list at 259 species. He was frequently asked to host famous birders looking to find West Virginia birds or provide information for regional and national bird reports or field guides. He served several terms on the West Virginia Bird Records Committee and served as its record compiler until 2015. His extensive traveling for birds helped him identify many birds whose sightings became West Virginia records. A review of the West Virginia Birds with Fewer Than Five Records on the Brooks Bird Club website² reveals that as of 2015, Wendell is cited on 26 of 63 such records, being listed on the original record 20 times. Once he identified a rare bird in West Virginia, he was quick to spread the word, so that others could see it as well. Perhaps one of his most famous bird identifications occurred when a shorebird was found at Winfield Lock and Dam and thought to be a Ruff



Photo by Gary Rankin

or Stilt Sandpiper. Wendell was called to identify the bird, which he immediately recognized as a Great Knot, a species he had just seen in Alaska earlier in the year. Wendell shared photos of the bird with leading birders around the country who agreed with his identification, and the record was accepted as only the second Great Knot record in the lower 48 states. As I travel, birders in other states still comment on the West Virginia Great Knot, wishing they too had seen it.

Throughout his life, Wendell Argabrite contributed much to birding in West Virginia and the West Virginia birding community. When I travel and tell other birders I'm from West Virginia, they often say that they remember a wonderful West Virginia birder, and his name was Wendell. We should all be remembered that way.

References

¹ Wonderful Memories of Wendell Argabrite, *The Mail Bag*, 73(2), 3–6, 2016.

² http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/uploads/5/2/8/3/52832773/2017_july_bird_review_list_7-14-17.pdf.

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Banding at Prickett's Fort State Park Marion County, West Virginia Spring and Fall 2016

Joey Herron

During the spring and fall 2016 season, 77 birds of 35 species were banded. Six birds from previous bandings were also captured. Three Carolina Wrens, an Indigo Bunting, a Magnolia Warbler, and an American Robin were all recaptured. Eight new species were added to the species list this year, including two Lincoln's Sparrows banded on May 11 and September 28, a Northern Flicker banded on May 11, a Willow Flycatcher banded on May 25, three Red-breasted Nuthatches banded on September 20, October 4 and 18, a young Killdeer banded on May 11, a Cape May Warbler banded on May 11, a Hooded Warbler banded on September 28, and a Gray-cheeked Thrush banded on September 28 bringing the species total to 64.

Since 2008, I have been conducting a birding class for the Lifelong Learners group of Pierpont Community and Technical College in Fairmont, West Virginia. The spring and fall classes usually consist of one classroom session and three or four field sessions at Prickett's Fort State Park during early May and early October. Other banding takes place as weather permits.

Prickett's Fort State Park is located along the Monongahela River in Marion County and has a diverse habitat including a large riparian area and many wooded areas with trails and openings. The various habitats support a wide variety of species and provide many good opportunities for observing and banding birds.

Nets were set above the main trail area, next to the trail parking lot, which is located west of the visitor's center. Four to five nets are used along an abandoned railroad bed running across a power line right of way. The banding has taken place in this same area every spring and fall since starting in 2008.

Of this total of 64 species, 460 birds have been banded from the spring of 2008 to the fall of 2016. Over a third of the bandings are made up of four species: Northern Cardinal (52), Carolina Chickadee (44), White-eyed Vireo (25), and Gray Catbird (26).

The following chart shows numbers and species banded.

Species	Number Banded 2016	Banded 2008–2016
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	0	2(captured)
Killdeer	1	1
Downy Woodpecker	1	4
Northern Flicker	1	1
Willow Flycatcher	1	1
Least Flycatcher	0	1
White-eyed Vireo	1	25
Warbling Vireo	1	5
Red-eyed Vireo	1	12
Blue Jay	0	5
Carolina Chickadee	8	44

Species	Number Banded 2016	Banded 2008–2016
Black-capped Chickadee	0	1
Eastern Tufted Titmouse	1	8
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	3
House Wren	0	1
Carolina Wren	3	24
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	1	7
Golden-crowned Kinglet	0	1
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	0	2
Eastern Bluebird	0	2
Gray-cheeked Thrush	1	1
Swainson's Thrush	2	4
Wood Thrush	0	5
American Robin	1	4
Gray Catbird	2	26
Brown Thrasher	2	4
Northern Mockingbird	1	10
Cedar Waxwing	0	1
American Goldfinch	2	9
Eastern Towhee	3	21
Chipping Sparrow	2	10
Field Sparrow	0	3
Song Sparrow	6	22
Swamp Sparrow	0	1
White-throated Sparrow	0	4
White-crowned Sparrow	0	1
Lincoln's Sparrow	2	2
Yellow-breasted Chat	0	4
Orchard Oriole	3	8
Baltimore Oriole	5	16
Blue-winged Warbler	0	3
Swainson's Warbler	0	1
Orange-crowned Warbler	0	2
Nashville Warbler	0	3
Connecticut Warbler	0	1
Kentucky Warbler	0	2
Common Yellowthroat	2	9
Hooded Warbler	1	1
American Redstart	0	6
Cape May Warbler	1	1
Northern Parula	0	1
Magnolia Warbler	5	19
Bay-breasted Warbler	0	1
Yellow Warbler	2	9
Chestnut-sided Warbler	0	1
Blackpoll Warbler	0	1

Species	Number Banded 2016	Banded 2008–2016
Black-throated Blue Warbler	0	1
Yellow-rumped Warbler	6	23
Prairie Warbler	0	1
Black-throated Green Warbler	1	4
Wilson's Warbler	1	3
Scarlet Tanager	0	1
Northern Cardinal	7	52
Indigo Bunting	2	11
Totals	77	460

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2016 Floyd Bartley Memorial Award Announced

On March 5, 2017, Albert R. Buckelew, Jr., President of the Brooks Bird Club, announced the 2016 Floyd Bartley Memorial Award at the club's Early Spring Meeting at North Bend State Park. Janice Runyon earned the award for her article, "A Rufous Hummingbird in Brooke County, West Virginia, and a Design for a Cold Weather Hummingbird Feeder," which appeared in the April 2016 issue of *The Redstart*, Vol. 83, No. 2, pp. 40–46.

The Floyd Bartley Memorial Award was established by an anonymous donor to honor the memory of Floyd Bartley. (See *The Redstart* 1976, Vol. 43, p. 68.) Previous winners of the Award are listed below.

1976	Ray and Jo Ashworth
1979	Harry Slack
1980	James D. Phillips
1981	J. Lawrence Smith
1982	Eugene E. Hutton
1983	Linnie Coon
1984	Patricia Temple
1985	Melvin Hooker
1987	Jonathan Minear
1988	Julie Beatty
1989	Lorraine Rollefson
1993	Ralph K. Bell
1994	Wendell Argabrite
1995	Greg Eddy
1997	Ann Pyle
1998	John Northeimer
1999	Joey Herron
2000	Anna M. McRae
2001	Gary Felton
2002	William Beatty
2003	Matthew Orsie
2004	George E. Hall
2005	Jane J. Whitaker
2006	Matthew Orsie
2008	Rosie Campbell
2009	Jane Whitaker and Reba Hutton
2010	James Triplett and Beverly Triplett
2011	Joey Herron
2012	Scott Pendleton
2013	Douglas McClure Wood and Cynthia D. Ellis
2015	John Boback

Book Review

Albert R. Buckelew, Jr.

America's Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake. Ted Levin. May 2016. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Cloth, 520 pages. 35 halftones. ISBN: 9780226040646. \$35.00.

I immediately had a nostalgic moment when I read the first paragraphs of *America's Snake*, which are about a group of rattlesnake enthusiasts watching a veterinarian remove porcupine quills from the mouth of a timber rattlesnake in a remote cabin. One of my first experiences with a rattlesnake was as a student lab assistant taking samples with sterile swabs from the vents, mouths, and from under scales of sick rattlesnakes held by the owner, who took them one-by-one from a cardboard box and held them for me. I had heard my professor say on the phone, "Sure bring them over, my lab assistant will take care of it." The professor quickly left the lab for home, and a man with a box of a dozen or so sick snakes showed up a while later. At first I had no idea what was in his box, although I did hear weak rattle sounds, a sound that in the woods would have had my immediate attention. Incidentally, I was successful in isolating the bacteria carried by mites as the cause of the snake sickness. The snakes' owner, who kept rattlesnakes to obtain venom, which he sold for scientific research and antivenin production, had to rebuild his snake holding pens to rid them of mites.

The timber rattlesnake, and most other species of rattlesnake, are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, climate warming, over collection, destruction of dens, disease, rattlesnake "roundups," which can include cruel activities such as "rattlesnake stomping," and the tendency of many people to kill poisonous snakes on sight. Author Ted Levin presents his arguments for conservation of rattlesnakes, which he claims are "peaceable, social, long-lived, ... not inclined to bite...." Levin's book is a complete treatment of rattlesnake biology including ecology, special behaviors, anatomy and physiology, venom production, antivenin and bite treatment, shrinking range, persecution, evolution and classification, and conservation. The writing is colorful, witty, scientifically accurate and illustrated with many fascinating stories about encounters with rattlesnakes and rattlesnake enthusiasts in the field. The book will appeal to amateurs and professional herpetologists alike.

Problems for recovery of increasingly-rare populations of rattlesnakes include government agencies slow to take action, insurance companies opposed to reintroduction, lack of knowledge about captive breeding, and fear of snakes by the general public. Why should rattlesnakes be left alone, especially in more remote areas where they present little danger to people? They are beautiful animals with fascinating behaviors. Rattlesnakes eat many rats and mice, which eat our crops and carry diseases such as hantavirus, bubonic plague, and Lyme disease. Levin makes an enlightened and entertaining plea for their conservation.

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eBird Reports and News

Mike Slaven

In this issue of the Redstart, I would like to address some of the questions that many birders have when they receive an email from the eBird reviewer that has the heading “A Question About Your (Name of Species) Observation in eBird.” I remember the first time one of these requests arrived in my inbox. My initial reaction was to take it personally. After all, I was very careful with my observations! I cared about my reputation and was upset that my word was being questioned. The reviewer certainly was not there, but I *was*, and so why question my sighting? I almost did not answer the inquiry, but eventually my injured pride overcame my petulance, and I submitted the most exhaustive field description I could. This had a curious effect. In this case, my observation was confirmed, and I also learned a good deal more about the elements of a good description of a species. I had learned a useful skill, and one that is threatened by bird-identifying software and the pervasive notion that digital photography supersedes careful field observation. Describing a bird seen in the field is an important part of growing as a birder, and one that is easily improved with practice.

Since my initial misgivings about the review process, I have become the state reviewer for West Virginia, and my perspective has changed dramatically about the importance of reviewing our observations. An eBird reviewer is not (with very rare exceptions) telling you that you did or did not see a species. Rather, the reviewer’s job is to decide whether the confidence level of the report is high enough to include in the pool of scientific data. I have invalidated my own report on at least one occasion! Even if your sightings are left unconfirmed after a review, such a determination does not mean that you cannot count the bird for listing purposes and it certainly does not impugn your skills and honesty. For example, if you observe a rare bird, but the reviewer decides there is not enough certainty to validate the sighting, you can still (if you are convinced of the identification) include it as a species you have seen, both in eBird and the ABA site.

Here are a few tips on how you should react when the dreaded email questioning your sighting arrives. First, don’t take it personally. You’ve seen something out of the ordinary, so naturally the review team is curious. The lists we submit to eBird are a very-good means of preserving our memories, our scattered checklists, and our birding odyssey. Life lists, county, state and year lists are easy to track. The idea of eBirding works in part because birders find it personally useful. But the data we give to eBird is also used for an important scientific purpose: to add to the monitoring and tracking of bird populations, and to conduct scientific research on populations, range, distribution, mating success, nesting behavior, migration patterns, and a host of other important scientific projects.

I have sent requests for further documentation to almost every birder in the state who has submitted more than a few lists to eBird. If you post regularly, you will almost certainly have some requests for further information. I have asked the same from birding magazine editors, well-known bird listers, eBird luminaries, and professional ornithologists. So do not panic when you get the request. The best course of action is to simply do your best to address the questions, and do your best to tell what you saw or heard. There is no need to embellish, and do not simply copy a description from a field guide. I have a few tips for descriptions that can sometimes avoid observations going under review as well.

First, when you are asked for a comment or description when submitting a list, be specific. For example, I have seen lists with comments such as “not a Canada Goose,” “seen well,” “confirmed identity,” “seen clearly,” “obvious migrant,” “heard,” “flyover,” “exact count,” “positive i.d.” and so forth. From a reviewer’s viewpoint, you are not really giving an outside observer anything to work with to help validate the sighting. Instead, think about saying in positive terms why you identified the bird. For example, a Chipping Sparrow might be described in this way: “a small sparrow with a rusty cap with a black line through the eye and a rather small bill for a sparrow.” Recall what you saw and heard and try to use the closest descriptive language you can to describe the sighting. This goes a long way towards helping a reviewer.

Also, since some of you have been adding the subspecies, please remember that if a subspecies is the expected form in the state, you really don’t need to add the subspecies identification unless you clearly observed that it is that subspecies and no other. An example of this would be Northern Flicker. The filters eBird use would assume it to be Yellow-shafted in West Virginia unless you specify differently. If you clearly see the Yellow-shafted Flicker plumage, feel free to identify it to the subspecies, but if you do not actually see it, please simply leave it at the species level. If you are asked for a comment, remember that “expected form in the area” or similar wording does not really positively mean that you saw unmistakable field marks that eliminate other, rarer subspecies.

Sorry about the long explanation of the review process—let’s shift focus and see what eBird has to tell us about early spring 2017!

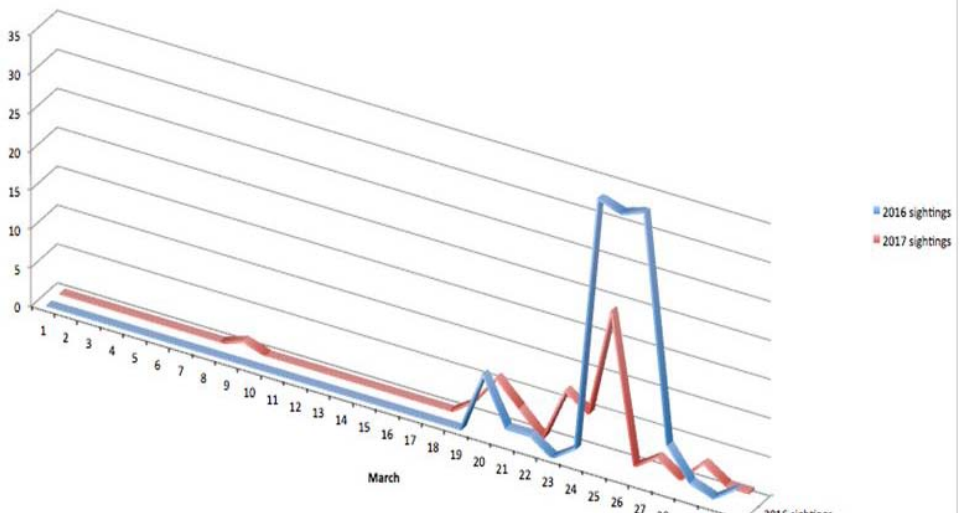
Some trends (short term at least) that the data shows this year include the following: migration this spring was generally pushed forward, anywhere from three to ten days, according to species and date. This was probably due to the mild weather patterns. This was the second-warmest winter recorded in West Virginia, and the general trend of a very-warm winter seems to have played a role in migration rhythms. Pine Warblers, Blue-headed Vireos, Yellow-throated Warblers and other early migrants were regularly being reported well before the expected arrival dates. When the pattern and distribution of sightings is plotted against previous year, the earlier migration is quite noticeable.

Having high-quality evidence of the numbers and distribution of various species can help refine our thinking as we try to predict and track bird populations and movements.

As a very small example of the usefulness of the eBird data, let me offer up a small sample of the power of the reports that are available for West Virginia. I became curious about the appearance of a small number of extremely early-arriving Blue-winged Teals in March 2017. Was my impression that they were far out of date correct? Was this a truly aberrant event? After these birds arrived, it seemed like the expected larger influx of the species during the last week of March showed a large decrease from earlier years. Was this just my imagination? Was something different occurring this year? I decided to use the data from eBird to see if there was a visible difference this year as opposed to the recent past. With the data from eBird reports, I was able to quickly put together a graphic representation of this year’s sightings as compared to the last.

As the chart shows, there is indeed a close correlation between the rapid influx of Blue-winged Teals in the years 2016 and 2017. Obviously, the period from March 19-30 is a good time to look for this duck. More interestingly, though, is the aberrant early arrivals around March 9 early in 2017. After these very early birds showed up, there was a gap of around ten days, until the expected wave of migrants reached the state. The overall number

Blue-winged Teal Sightings, 2016-17



of birds, according to the reports, was much lower in 2017 than in 2016. Obviously, this is just one example of the ways in which the data from eBird can be utilized, but it is easy to see the possibilities inherent in the system.

In my next update, I plan to show a few more examples of patterns of bird distribution and trends over time. Until then, consider submitting your sightings to eBird to help make the databases more robust. Happy birding!

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Field Notes Spring Season

March 1 – May 31, 2017

Casey Rucker

All three months of spring were warmer and wetter than average in West Virginia, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. April was the second-warmest on record, and the state experienced its eighteenth-wettest spring.

These notes were gathered from the the West Virginia Birds Listserv, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, from bird-count results, and from field notes submitted to the editor by e-mail and regular mail. The full content of the submitted notes by the contributors of the WV Listserv may be viewed by visiting the archives at the following web site: <http://list.audubon.org/archives/wv-bird.html>.

David Patick and Michael Griffith discovered a first-state-record **Cinnamon Teal** on March 5 at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, and the bird was also seen that day by Derek Courtney. Our spring season for unusual birds improved slightly over the prior year in West Virginia, with 232 species reported. Distribution of bird reports remained strong, as 45 of the 55 counties contributed to our state's avian lore. Birders found 34 species of warbler during the spring season.

Geese, Swans, and Ducks – On March 10, N. Wade Snyder found a blue-morph **Snow Goose** on Rissler Road, Jefferson County. Terry Bronson saw eight **Snow Geese** on Saltwell Road in Harrison County on March 23. In Mason County, Gary Rankin and Michael Griffith relocated fifteen continuing **Greater White-fronted Geese** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, on March 11 and again March 19, when they also saw a blue-morph **Snow Goose** at Gallipolis Ferry. **Canada Geese** remained in, or returned to, their usual haunts throughout West Virginia.

There were few reports of **swans** this spring in West Virginia. In Mason County, David Patick and Michael Griffith observed a **Mute Swan** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam on March 5, Steven Wilson saw a **Mute Swan** at McClintic Wildlife Management Area on April 9, and Laura Ceperley saw a **Mute Swan** at the same location on May 23. In Jefferson County Joette Borzik watched an overflight of 28 **Tundra Swans** in Harpers Ferry on March 5, and two **Tundra Swans** on March 23 on the Shenandoah River. On March 11 Frederick Atwood saw a **Tundra Swan** behind the Sheetz in Moorefield, Hardy County, where the bird had lingered for three months, as observed by Diane Holsinger, Kathy King, and Jane Whitaker. N. Wade Snyder counted 105 **Tundra Swans** flying over Bardane, Jefferson County, on March 21.

A warm winter and spring oddly produced improved duck sightings in West Virginia compared to 2016. The first-record **Cinnamon Teal** found by David Patick and Michael Griffith at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam on March 5 is described earlier in these notes. There were many reports statewide of **Wood Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers, Common Mergansers, and Red-breasted Mergansers**. The following **ducks** were reported in five-to-ten counties during the spring: **Gadwalls, American Wigeons, American Black Ducks, Green-winged Teal, and Ruddy Ducks**. The following species were only reported in the counties listed: **Northern Shovelers** in Mason (DP, MG, GR), Preston (TB), and Summers (JP); **Northern**

Pintails in Jefferson (BT, JBz) and Preston (TB); **Canvasbacks** in Grant (FA), Mason (DP, MG, GR), and Summers (JP); **Redheads** in Grant (FA), Kanawha (HG), Mason (DP, MG, GR), and Tucker (CR); **Greater Scaup** in Grant (FA), Mason (GR, MG), Preston (TB), and Randolph (RBo); **Surf Scoter** in Mason (DP, MG, GR); **Black Scoters** in Taylor (DCo); **Long-tailed Ducks** in Jefferson (PS, JBz); and **Common Goldeneyes** in Jefferson (CD) and Pendleton (HMy). On March 5, Jon Benedetti, Michael Schramm, and Mindy and Alan Waldron saw all three **merganser** species on the Ohio River in Wood County.

Quail – For the first time in years, Larry Metheny saw a **Northern Bobwhite** at his feeders in Bruceton Mills, Preston County, on May 28.

Grouse and Turkeys – Birders throughout the state reported **Wild Turkeys**, while reports of **Ruffed Grouse** came from Barbour (TB, DD), Lewis (TB), Monongalia (SO), Nicholas (SWi), Pocahontas (DP, RBi), and Summers (JP) Counties.

Grebes – Birders reported **Pied-billed Grebes** in 14 counties, while reports of **Horned Grebes** came only from Grant (FA), Jefferson (JBz), Mason (GR, MG), Nicholas (SWi), Taylor (TB, DD), and Tucker (CR) Counties.

Pigeons and Doves – Randy Bodkins saw a **White-winged Dove** in Alpena, Randolph County, on April 30, where the bird had arrived the day before. Prior to this sighting there were only four state records, all from the past twelve years. **Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** continue to reside throughout the state. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** continue in Union, Monroe County, as observed by James Phillips on April 12 and by David Patick on May 27.

Cuckoos – **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** began to arrive throughout the state during late April, and by the end of the season had been reported in 14 counties. **Black-billed Cuckoos** appeared beginning in early May, and were reported in eight counties. On May 18 Herb Myers watched a pair of **Black-billed Cuckoos** *mating* near Jenningson, Tucker County.

Goatsuckers and Swifts – **Common Nighthawks** seem to be increasingly rare in West Virginia, with May appearances only in Cabell (DP), Putnam (KK), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. Richard Bailey relayed a reliable report of a **Chuck-Will's-Widow** heard on April 20 along North Mill Creek, Grant County. Jerry Westfall relayed Kevin Campbell's report of a **Chuck-Will's-Widow** near Parkersburg, Wood County, beginning on April 27 through the beginning of the summer season. **Eastern Whip-Poor-Wills** and **Chimney Swifts** were widely reported throughout the state.

Hummingbirds – **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** began arriving in mid-April, and appeared in reports from 19 counties throughout the state. James and Judy Phillips hosted a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** on April 13 at their home in Pipestem, Summers County, the first reported in West Virginia this year.

Rails and Coots – Joette Borzik and Chuck Parker found a **Virginia Rail** at Altona Marsh, Jefferson County, on April 1. On April 17 Michael Griffith spotted a **Virginia Rail** at Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area, Cabell County, where one or two individuals continued to be seen through May 21 (DP, JK, GR); and a **Sora** was seen at the same location on April 22 and 26 (MG, JK, DP). On May 13, James Phillips found both a **Virginia Rail** and a **Sora** at Bluestone Wildlife Management Area, Summers County, and the birds were re-found two days later by the 46th annual Pipestem Area Spring Bird Count of the Bibbee Nature Club. **American Coot** reports were once again scanty this spring, coming only from eight counties.

Plovers – In Mason County, Michael Griffith spotted a **Semipalmated Plover** at Ashton Ponds on May 7, and on May 21 along with Gary Rankin and David Patick he saw four **Semipalmated Plovers** at Shady Waters Campground. On May 16, Terry Bronson found a **Semipalmated Plover** at Upper Pleasant Creek Wildlife Management Area, Barbour County. **Killdeer** were well-represented with reports from 19 counties.

Sandpipers – **Sandpiper** reports were below average this spring, with 12 **sandpiper** species making an appearance. Observers reported **Spotted** and **Solitary Sandpipers** in 19 and 13 counties, respectively. Reports of **Wilson’s Snipe** came from nine counties, and birders found **Lesser Yellowlegs** in seven counties. The following species were reported in the counties listed: **Dunlin** in Kanawha (HG); **Least Sandpiper** in Barbour (TB), Grant (FA), Mason (MG, DP, JsH, GR), and Summers (JP); **White-Rumped Sandpipers** in Hardy (DCo) and Mason (DP, MG, JsH, GR); **Pectoral Sandpipers** in Grant (DH) and Mason (DP, MG); **Semipalmated Sandpipers** in Mason (DP, JsH, GR, MG); **Long-billed Dowitcher** in Mason (GR, DP, MG); **American Woodcocks** in Kanawha (LC, RG, HG, DG), Monongalia (TB), Monroe (Rbi), Tucker (Jbu), Tyler (TB), and Wetzel (WJ); and **Greater Yellowlegs** in Barbour (TB), Mason (MG, JK, DP, GR), and Summers (JP).

Gulls and Terns – Sightings of **Bonaparte’s Gulls** came from Cabell (MG, JK), Jefferson (JBz, JF), Kanawha (RG), Mason (GR, MG, SWi, DP, JK), Nicholas (SWi), Summers (JP), Tucker (RBo, SKi), Wayne (GR, MG), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. **Ring-billed Gulls** were reported in Jefferson (CD), Kanawha (RG), Mason (GR, MG, DP, JK), Pleasants (JB), Summers (JJP), Tucker (TW), Wayne (HG), and Wood (JB) Counties, and **Herring Gulls** were reported in Jefferson (CD), Mason (GR, MG, DP, JK), Summers (JJP), Wayne (HG), and Wood (JB) Counties.

Tern sightings were even sparser than usual this season. **Forster’s Tern** was the only species reported, from Braxton (CR), Lewis (LM), Taylor (TB), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Loons – **Common Loon** reports came from Grant (DH, FA), Jefferson (JBz), Mason (MG), Monongalia (TB), Monroe (JP), Nicholas (SWi), and Tucker (RBo) Counties.

Cormorants – West Virginia birders reported **Double-crested Cormorants** in 10 counties.

Hérons and Egrets – On April 22, Jacqueline Burns found an **American Bittern** in Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Tucker County. **Great Blue Herons** and **Green Herons** appeared widely. On May 28, Richard Gregg saw a **Green Heron** *on the nest* in Belle, Kanawha County. **Great Egrets** occasioned reports from Cabell (MG, JK, ReT), Hardy (SWi), Jefferson (JBz), Mercer (JP), Preston (TB, DD), and Summers (JJP) Counties. On April 7, James Phillips reported that Betsy Reeder had sent him a photograph of a **Cattle Egret** in Hinton, Summers County. Mollee Brown discovered another **Cattle Egret** on her farm in Fairmont, Marion County, on April 19, and the bird was also seen by Joseph Hildreth and Steven Wilson. On May 29, Derek Courtney spotted a **Black-crowned Night-Heron** in Paw Paw, Morgan County.

Vultures – Birders in only seven West Virginia counties reported seeing **Black Vultures**, while **Turkey Vulture** reports came from 17 counties.

Hawks and Eagles – **Osprey** and **Bald Eagles** were reported throughout the state, generally in small numbers. Cynthia Ellis watched an **Osprey** *building a nest* on a communications tower on the Kanawha River, Putnam County, on April 2. On May 18 and 19, Donny Good saw 10 **Bald Eagles** near Moorefield, Hardy County. Bruni Haydl watched a **Bald Eagle** take a dead rabbit from her yard in Charles Town, Jefferson County,

on May 14, and then *feed the prey to its nestlings*. **Northern Harriers** appeared in reports from Berkeley County (PS), Cabell County (MG, DP), Jefferson County (CD), Mason County (GR, MG, DP), and Tucker County (CR, SKi, RBo); and birders reported **Sharp-shinned Hawks** in Cabell (GR, MG), Jackson (DB), Monongalia (TB), Monroe (JJP), Raleigh (BDe), and Tucker (CR) Counties. Stephen Kimbrell watched a *pair of Northern Harriers* at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge, Tucker County, on April 9. On March 27, Nancy and Elliott Kirschbaum had a new yard species when they hosted a **Northern Goshawk** in their yard in Shepherdstown, Jefferson County. Reports of **Cooper's Hawks**, **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **Broad-winged Hawks**, and **Red-tailed Hawks** were widespread in West Virginia. Wil Hershberger hosted a **Cooper's Hawk** as well as many **passerines** at his feeders in Hedgesville, Berkeley County, on March 15. Steven Wilson saw the only reported **Rough-legged Hawk** this season on Corridor H in Tucker County on March 19. On March 3, James Phillips saw a **Golden Eagle** in Athens, Mercer County, and on March 9 Diane Holsinger saw two **Golden Eagles** on Parker Hollow Road, Hardy County.

Owls – **Owl** reports were generally sparse during the spring season. Birders in only four West Virginia counties reported **Eastern Screech-Owls**: Jefferson (JBz), Marion (JoH, TB, DG), Summers (JJP), and Tucker (LC). **Great Horned Owls** inspired reports only in Jefferson (DHa) and Preston (LM) Counties, and West Virginia birders reported **Barred Owl** in 15 counties. On May 29, Aaron Graham flushed a **Long-eared Owl** on Canaan Mountain, Tucker County. David Patick, Derek Courtney, Matthew Orsie, and Gary Rankin found a **Northern Saw-whet Owl** on the Scenic Highway, Pocahontas County, on May 13 during their 2017 Big Day.

Kingfishers – **Belted Kingfisher** reports were widespread in West Virginia this season.

Woodpeckers – Our state's seven species of **woodpeckers** were all widely reported, with sightings of **Red-headed Woodpeckers** in nine counties, and of **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** in ten counties.

Falcons – **American Kestrels** appeared widely in West Virginia, while **Merlins** were spotted only in Kanawha County (HG), Mason County (GR, DP, MG, JK), and Tucker County (CR). **Peregrine Falcon** sightings came from Ohio (PM), Pleasants (JB), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Flycatchers – **Olive-sided Flycatcher** reports only came from Pocahontas County this spring: at the Cranberry Glades boardwalk (SWi, ReT, DP) and near Durbin (RBo). Mindy and Alan Waldron found a **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher** at their Sandstone Falls banding station, Raleigh County, as reported on May 26. **Eastern Wood-Pewees**, **Acadian Flycatchers**, **Eastern Phoebes**, **Great Crested Flycatchers**, and **Eastern Kingbirds** were widely-reported throughout the state. Birders in Brooke County (RT0), Pocahontas County (ReT), and Tucker County (HMy) reported **Alder Flycatcher**. Reports of **Willow Flycatcher** came from Barbour (TB), Cabell (MG), Jefferson (BD), Mason (GR, DP, MG), Mercer (JP), Monongalia (TB), and Tucker (HMy) Counties, while **Least Flycatchers** were only reported in Pocahontas (BBu), Raleigh (MAW), and Randolph (HMy, WT) Counties.

Shrikes – Richard Bailey reported seven **Loggerhead Shrikes** found during mid-April in the Greenbrier Valley, Greenbrier and Monroe Counties.

Vireos – Our five breeding **vireos**, **White-eyed**, **Yellow-throated**, **Blue-headed**, **Warbling**, and **Red-eyed**, returned to nesting grounds throughout the state beginning in

early April. On May 13, David Patick, Derek Courtney, Matthew Orsie, and Gary Rankin found a **Philadelphia Vireo**, the only one reported this season, on Fairview Ridge, Cabell County, during their 2017 Big Day.

Crows, Jays, and Ravens – **Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens** were reported widely throughout the state. **Fish Crows** were reported in Hardy (SWi) and Jefferson (BD, JBz, JF, LW, DHa) Counties.

Larks – **Horned Larks** appeared in small numbers in reports from Grant County (FA), Jefferson County (JBz), Mason County (GR, DP, MG, JK), and Randolph County (RBo).

Swallows – **Purple Martins** were reported in Jefferson (JBz), Mason (GR, DP, MG, JK, SWi), McDowell (CR), Monroe (RD), Summers (JJP), Taylor (TB, JH, DD), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties. **Tree Swallows** had already made several appearances in West Virginia at the end of the winter, and joined **Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Cliff Swallows, and Barn Swallows** in widespread returns to West Virginia this spring. David Patick, Michael Griffith, and Janet Keating saw 25 **Bank Swallows** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, on April 26, and **Bank Swallows** were still present on May 21 (DP, MG). Terry Bronson found a **Bank Swallow** at Rehe Wildlife Management Area, Preston County, on May 8.



Cinnamon Teal. Documentation photo by David Patick

Chickadees and Titmice – **Black-capped** and **Carolina Chickadees** were reported in their usual habitats in West Virginia this spring. Joey Herron saw **Carolina Chickadees** *nesting* in a pole at Prickett's Fort State Park, Marion County, on May 8. **Tufted Titmice** appeared throughout our state as well. On April 8, Cynthia Burkhart watched a *pair of nestbuilding Tufted Titmice* plucking hairs from the tail of a raccoon that had been treed by her dog in Ritchie County.

Nuthatches – In keeping with their widespread presence during the winter, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** were plentiful in West Virginia this spring. **White-breasted Nuthatches** continued to appear widely.

Creepers – **Brown Creeper** reports were up this season, coming from 12 counties.

Wrens – **House** and **Carolina Wrens** appeared in good numbers in reports from all over the state. Kim Kazmierski listened to a **House Wren** singing in Hurricane, Putnam County, on April 11. **Winter Wrens** were reported in Cabell (GR, MG), Grant (FA), Jefferson (DHa), Pendleton (FA, CR), Randolph (WT, RBi), and Tucker (CR) Counties. May 13 was the day to find **Marsh Wrens** in West Virginia, with one found by David Patick, Derek Courtney, Matthew Orsie, and Gary Rankin at Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area, Cabell County, during their Big Day, and the other found by the Spring Bird Count of the Bibbee Nature Club in Summers County.

Gnatcatchers – Beginning at the end of March, **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** returned to breeding grounds throughout the state. James Phillips spotted the first **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** reported during the season, on March 29 at Bluestone State Park, Summers County.

Kinglets – Birders observed **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in 13 West Virginia counties, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in 15 counties during the season.

Thrushes – It was a fair spring for **thrush** reports in West Virginia, where the usual seven species of **thrush** were found. **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Wood Thrushes**, and **American Robins** were seen throughout most reporting counties. **Veeries** were reported only in Jefferson (BD, HMc), Marion (TB), Pocahontas (ReT, DP), Preston (TB), Randolph (HMy, WT), Summers (JP), and Tucker (CR, LC, HMy, AG) Counties; **Gray-cheeked Thrush** reports came from Fayette (MAW) and Wayne (MG) Counties; **Swainson's Thrushes** inspired reports from Cabell (MG), Fayette (MAW), Monongalia (SO, LS), Randolph (WT), Summers (JP), Taylor (TB), Tucker (CR), and Wayne (MG) Counties; and **Hermit Thrushes** were reported from Grant (FA), Jefferson (CD, JBz), Monongalia (TB), Pocahontas (ReT), Randolph (WT), Summers (JP), Tucker (HMy, CR), and Wood (KCa) Counties.

Mockingbirds and **Thrashers** – During the spring season **Gray Catbirds**, **Northern Mockingbirds**, and **Brown Thrashers** once again serenaded their breeding grounds in West Virginia. Elizabeth Bullard found a pair of **Brown Thrashers** *building an early nest* on March 30 in a neighbor's yard in Pocahontas County.

Starlings – **European Starlings** continued their broad occupation of habitats in our state.

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwings** were reported in 15 counties this spring.

Weaver Finches – The **House Sparrow** continues to occupy our state, primarily in urban and farm settings.

Pipits – Randy Bodkins found 18 **American Pipits** in Elkins, Randolph County, on April 6, in the same location where he saw one **American Pipit** on March 10. **American Pipits** also appeared in small numbers in Grant (FA), Hardy (DH), and Nicholas (SWi) Counties.

Finches and **Allies** – **House Finches**, **Purple Finches**, and **American Goldfinches** appeared in reports throughout the state. David Patick found two **Red Crossbills** in their familiar haunts at the Cranberry Glades Visitor Center, Pocahontas County, on April 15, and in the same area on May 27. Frederick Atwood saw two **Red Crossbills**

in eastern Pendleton County on April 29. Aaron Graham observed a flyover of several **Red Crossbills** on Canaan Mountain, Tucker County, on May 29. **Pine Siskins** appeared only in Berkeley (MO), Summers (JP), Tucker (CR), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties, and four **Evening Grosbeaks** were reported on March 10 in Tucker County (CR).

Towhees, Sparrows, and Juncos – **Eastern Towhees** began to appear at the start of the spring season, and by its end were reported from all areas of the state. On April 15, Jon Benedetti reported Kyle Carlsen's find of a **Harris's Sparrow** on Middle Island, Pleasants County, where the bird remained until April 18 (JB, WJ, DJE, JWe). Although there are more than five records of **Harris's Sparrow** in West Virginia, the species is on the state review list because of its rarity. Sixteen other species of sparrow made appearances in accustomed haunts throughout our state. Frederick Atwood found the only reported **American Tree Sparrows** of the season at Kimsey Run Reservoir, Hardy County, on March 11, and Derek Courtney turned up the only reported **Clay-colored Sparrows**, in Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge in Tucker County on May 29. **Fox Sparrows** appeared through mid-April, and **White-throated** and **White-crowned Sparrows** were reported through the middle of May. All three species were widely reported. Resident and returning **sparrow** species made first appearances this season in reports from the following counties: **Chipping** on March 10 in Monongalia (TB), **Field** on March 9 in Jefferson (CD), **Vesper** on March 25 in Jefferson (LW), **Savannah** on March 11 in Grant (FA), **Grasshopper** on April 20 in Jefferson (WS), **Song** on March 5 in Wood (JB), **Lincoln's** on May 12 in Wetzel (WJ), **Swamp** on March 11 in Cabell (GR, MG), and **Dark-eyed Junco** on March 3 in Summers (JP). The **Lincoln's Sparrow** found by Wilma Jarrell on Fairview Ridge, Wetzel County, on May 12 was the only one reported in the state during the season.

Chats – **Yellow-breasted Chats** first appeared on April 20 in Gilmer County, as reported by Tom Fox, and by the end of the season had appeared widely throughout the state. A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was a new yard bird for Carol Del-Colle on May 9 in Summit Point, Jefferson County. There were reports from nine other counties of this species, a member of a newly-designated family separate from the **warblers**.

Blackbirds and Allies – **Bobolinks** returned to only six reporting counties, with a first appearance on April 29 in Canaan Valley, Tucker County, as reported by the editor of these notes. There were many West Virginia reports of **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Eastern Meadowlarks**, **Common Grackles**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Orchard** and **Baltimore Orioles**. **Rusty Blackbirds** appeared only in reports from Grant (FA), Jefferson (JBz), Marion (TB), Mercer (JP), and Tucker (SKi, CR) Counties.

Warblers – The following warblers, all regular migrants through or breeders in West Virginia, made their first-of-season appearances in the following counties: **Ovenbird**: April 16, Wayne (MG), **Worm-Eating Warbler**: April 16, Pocahontas (DP), **Louisiana Waterthrush**: March 25, Cabell (GR, DP), **Northern Waterthrush**: April 29, Mason (DP, MG), **Golden-winged Warbler**: May 14, Randolph (RBo), **Blue-winged Warbler**: April 16, Wayne (MG), **Black-and-white Warbler**: April 2, Wayne (DP, MG), **Prothonotary Warbler**: April 15, Wood (JB, DE, KCa), **Swainson's Warbler**: April 22, Kanawha (KC), **Tennessee Warbler**: April 20, Wood (JB), **Nashville Warbler**: April 13, Harrison (RBr), **Mourning Warbler**: May 6, Pocahontas (DP), **Kentucky Warbler**: April 20, Wayne (MG, JK), **Common Yellowthroat**: April 15, Preston (TB), **Hooded Warbler** and **American Redstart**: April 16, Wayne (MG), **Cape May Warbler**: April 27, Marion (JoH), **Cerulean Warbler**: April 19, Calhoun (TF), **Northern Parula**: April 5,

Summers (JP), **Magnolia Warbler**: April 26, Summers (JP), **Bay-breasted Warbler**: April 28, Cabell (MG, JK), **Blackburnian Warbler**: April 23, Fayette (SWi), **Yellow Warbler**: April 12, Summers (JP), **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: April 26, Summers (JP), **Blackpoll Warbler**: April 30, Wayne (DP, JsH), **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: April 22, Tucker (AC), **Palm Warbler**: March 11, Grant (FA), **Pine Warbler**: March 11, Hardy (FA), **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: March 16, Jefferson (JBz), **Yellow-throated Warbler**: March 28, Cabell (MG), **Prairie Warbler**: April 14, Greenbrier (MO), **Black-throated Green Warbler**: April 2, Wayne (DP, MG), **Canada Warbler**: April 30, Randolph (RBi), and **Wilson's Warbler**: May 12, Wetzel (WJ). Twenty-nine of these warbler species appeared on or before the "first-seen" dates in George A. Hall's *Birds of West Virginia*. LeJay Graffious found 12 **Ovenbirds** at Old Hemlock, Preston County, on April 26. Wilma Jarrell saw her first-of-the-year **Tennessee, Kentucky, and Cerulean Warblers** on Fairview Ridge, Wetzel County, on April 28. On May 23, Deborah Hale hosted lingering **Common Blackpolls** in her yard in Harpers Ferry, Jefferson County.

Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Buntings – Summer Tanagers appeared in Huntington, Cabell County, this spring, observed by Michael Griffith, Janet Keating, and David Patick on April 28 and 29; in Milliken, Kanawha County, on April 27, as spotted by Hulett Good, and near Welch, McDowell County, on May 30, as reported by the editor of these notes. Twenty-five counties hosted sightings of returning **Scarlet Tanagers**, the first of which was spotted by Michael Griffith at Beech Fork Lake Dam, Wayne County, on April 16.

Northern Cardinals, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings prompted numerous reports from birders in most parts of the state. **Blue Grosbeaks** were the subjects of reports from Grant (FA), Jefferson (WS, LW, DHa, JBz), Mason (MG GR, DP, LC), and Monroe (MAW) Counties. Marjorie Keatley heard a **Dickcissel** calling and singing on May 9 and 10 in Huntington, Cabell County, and on May 27 David Patick found a **Dickcissel** in Ronceverte, Monroe County.

Contributors to the Spring Field Notes: Frederick Atwood (FA), Richard Bailey (RBi), Jon Benedetti (JB), Randy Bodkins (RBo), Joette Borzik (JBz), Ross Brittain (RBr), Terry Bronson (TB), Elizabeth Bullard (BBu), Jacqueline Burns (JBU), Doren Burrell (DB), Kevin Cade (KC), Kevin Campbell (KCa), Laura Ceperley (LC), Amy Cimarolli (AC), Derek Courtney (DCo), David Daniels (DD), Rodney Davis (RD), Robert Dean (BD), Carol Del-Colle (CD), Beverly Delidow (BDe), Richard Esker (DE), Richard and Jeanette Esker (DJE), James Farley (JF), Tom Fox (TF), Donny Good (DG), Hullet Good (HG), Aaron Graham (AG), Richard Gregg (RG), Michael Griffith (MG), Deborah Hale (DHa), Joey Herron (JoH), Joseph Hildreth (JH), Joshua Holland (JsH), Diane Holsinger (DH), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), Kim Kazmierski (KK). Janet Keating (JK), Stephen Kimbrell (SKi), Paul McKay (PM), Heather McSharry (HMc), Larry Metheny (LM), Herb Myers (HMy), Susan Olcott (SO), Matthew Orsie (MO), David Patick (DP), James Phillips (JP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), Casey Rucker (CR), Paul Saffold (PS), Larry Schwab (LS), N. Wade Snyder (WS), Rennie Talbert (ReT), William and Carol Telfair (BT), William Tolin (WT), Ryan Tomazin (RTo), Mindy and Allen Waldron (MAW), Jerry Westfall (JWe), Steven Wilson (SWi), Lynn Wiseman (LW), and Thomas Wood (TW).

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2017 Calendar of Events The Brooks Bird Club, Inc.

Date	Activity	Place
January	BBC Membership Month	Wheeling, WV
February	Write an article for the Mail Bag or The Redstart	mail to editors
February 1-3	Trip to Killdeer Plains (Contact Gene Hilton)	
March 3-5	Early Spring Meeting (Contact Dick Esker)	North Bend State Park Harrisville, WV
March 9-10	Funk/Killbuck Marsh (overnight trip — contact Dick Esker)	
March 11	Waterfowl Field Trip (day trip) (Contact Carl Slater)	Seneca Lake, OH
April 22	Three Rivers Bird Club (day trip)	Raccoon Creek State Park, PA (Contact Ryan Tomazin)
May 4-7	Wildflower Pilgrimage, Blackwater Falls State Park	Davis, WV
May 13	International Migratory Bird Day/ N. American Migration Count	local chapters
June 9-17	Foray - 2017 Lost River Retreat Center, Hardy County	Lost City, WV (contact Janice Emrick or Ryan Tomazin)
August-October	Bird Banding	Dolly Sods, WV
October 20-22	BBC 85th Anniv./Annual Meeting	Oglebay Park, Wheeling, WV
November 8-12	Eastern Shore (Contact Carl Slater)	
Dec. 14-Jan. 5, '18	Christmas Bird Counts	local chapters

BBC FORAYS (dates and places tentative)

2017 Lost River Retreat Center, Hardy County Lost City, WV June 9-17, 2017
 2018 Thornwood 4-H Camp, Pocahontas County Thornwood, WV TBD

SEASONAL FIELD NOTES DUE

Winter: March 15 Spring: June 15 Summer: September 15 Fall: December 15
 MAIL TO: Casey Rucker, P.O. Box 2, Seneca Rocks, WV 26884, autoblock@frontiernet.net

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February 15 May 15 August 15 November 15
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The dates for the 2017 BBC program may be changed if necessary. Changes will be announced on the web page or in The Mail Bag.

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