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West Virginia's First Record of Nesting Mississippi Kites

Josh Holland

Sunday, August 18th, 2019 was a thrilling day for birders in the southwestern region of West Virginia. I spent all morning catching up on chores around the house and mowed the yard before the summer heat set in. I felt with all that “adulting” I had earned a nap and laid down on the couch, expecting to spend the rest of the day lazing around the house. My five-year-old son had other plans, as he doesn't like me getting too comfortable. Needless to say, my nap was all too brief.

My post-slumber frustration quickly faded as I glanced at my phone at 1:30 p.m. and noticed an eBird rare bird alert in my inbox from Putnam County. The fogginess of my nap vanished as I read the words “MISSISSIPPI KITE!” Perhaps I was still dreaming? An eBird report with photos of at least one adult and a recently fledged bird was submitted by Glenn Young, Jr., the previous day. Glenn is a software engineer by day and an amateur astronomer by night. Though not an avid birder, he has submitted his celestial sightings to a database similar to eBird for several years. After researching the kites, he knew they were rare and that birders across the state would certainly be interested to learn of his remarkable sighting.

The West Virginia Bird Records Committee removed Mississippi Kite from the Review List in 2019 and placed the species on the Watch List, expecting more frequent records in the coming years. One astute committee member noted on the most recently accepted record from N. Wade Snyder in 2018 that “[t]hey [Mississippi Kites] will likely become more common in southern West Virginia with this expansion over the next 20–30 years.” Recent nesting records from neighboring states Ohio, Kentucky, and Virginia gave reason to suspect that West Virginia would soon have nesting birds of its own. Historically in West Virginia, the species has been documented one bird at a time in flyover sightings, and the few accepted records that do exist are typically from the Eastern Panhandle. A nesting pair had never been documented in the state, and until Glenn's record there had never been a confirmed sighting in the western region.

Upon learning of Glenn's sighting, I pinched myself, and instantly sent a group-text to the Huntington birding crew. The chase was on. Mike Griffith and David Patick were the first to mobilize, arriving on the scene by 3 p.m. While Mike and Dave were en route, I shamelessly stalked Glenn on Facebook in an attempt to get more information about the birds and the best place to see them. Glenn quickly messaged me back that he had just left the house but could return later to assist if we got desperate. Fortunately, Glenn's aid was not required that afternoon, as Mike and Dave confirmed the sighting shortly after arrival, getting great looks at the juvenile and at least one adult.

Anne and David Wills and I arrived at the site just after; unfortunately, the birds had flown from their favorite perch. The Wills and I were then joined by Janet Keating, and soon the two adults soared gracefully by, though there was no sign of the juvenile. Our party hung around until nearly sunset that evening, hoping to get the point-blank views to which Mike and Dave had been treated. Though the young bird never showed, we enjoyed chatting with Glenn's family and their neighbors, who were initially wary of the increased traffic on their once quiet street. Perhaps sensing our glee, the neighbors soon realized how incredibly fortunate they were to have West Virginia's first nesting Mississippi Kites in their backyard.



Photographs by Josh Holland.

Subsequent visits over the next two weeks by birders from across the state and region yielded great looks and numerous photos of both the adults and juvenile. Lucky spectators were witness to the adults taking turns feeding the young kite. My third visit to the site was shared with Beverly and Jim Triplett, in which the juvenile called nonstop for food and was rewarded every few minutes. Truly an unforgettable experience. When not gliding above the ridge pulling cicadas from midair, the birds were most often seen perched in the many dead trees that span the ridge on Crooked Creek Road. The kites have chosen to nest in habitat that Mike Griffith best described as “Suburban Mixed Forest Ridgeline,” an unusual choice for a species that generally prefers to nest in low-lying areas.

Glenn and his family were visibly elated that their eBird post had brought so much joy to the birding community over the nearly two weeks we had with the kites. Discussions with Glenn and his neighbors affirmed that the birds had been on site since at least late spring in 2019. Remarkably, he also noted this was likely the third consecutive year the birds had taken up residence in their neighborhood, previously mistaking the avian celebrities for a neighbor’s racing pigeons.

Birders across the state already have their fingers crossed in anticipation of the kites’ return to their suburban home in Putnam County. A life bird for many, a new state bird for most, and one heck of a yard bird for Glenn Young, Jr., the kites were last documented on August 30th, 2019 by Mike Slaven.

1256 Huntington Avenue
Huntington, WV 245701

119th Christmas Bird Count

L. E. Helgerman

Let's look back on last year's Christmas Bird Count here in West Virginia during the 119th count season.

One hundred and eleven species were accounted for in West Virginia during the season. All twenty currently active state Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) conducted surveys. Nine of our counts were held on the first weekend of the CBC season December 15–16, nine were completed between Dec. 18–30, and two were conducted in January. Four of the counts were held on weekdays.

Seasonal Weather Report

Temperature lows: Only five counts began below freezing; the Athens-Princeton CBC had the coldest morning at 19 degrees Fahrenheit. Starting the morning much warmer were Charleston 48, Morgantown 46, Ona 45, and Lewisburg at 43 degrees. The McDowell County count averaged the coldest in West Virginia this season, with a temperature range of 28 to 35 degrees.

Temperature highs: Ten counts reached 50 degrees or higher, with Charleston peaking at 59 degrees. Charleston's December 18 count was the warmest recorded in the state this season, with a 48-degree low and a 59-degree high.

There were no reports of snow on the ground or falling during count days. Eleven counts did report light rain at some point, while Canaan and Charles Town noted heavy rain at times.

Effort Report

Participation: The Inwood count had the highest participation with 32 field birders. Two counts had 29 in the field and three other counts had more than 21 participants. Seven counts had 10 or fewer.

Hours: Seven counts had more than 60 party hours: Hampshire County 90.75, Canaan 86.75, Inwood 74.5, Pendleton County 63.5, Morgantown 63, Huntington 60.75, and Charles Town 60. Six other counts reported from 39 to 56 party hours on their count day.

Miles: Inwood led the way with 496.5 party miles, followed by Charles Town at 365.75, then Ona with 352.5 miles. Ten other counts had from 242 to 328 miles reported.

Feeder Watching: Fifteen counts had participants watching their feeders and yards. The Pendleton County count had the highest participation with 14 feeder watchers, Charlestown with 6, while Elkins, Parkersburg, and Pocahontas County all had 5 helping.

Nocturnal Birding: Fourteen counts had owling teams. Four counts reported more than 4 hours of owling. Ona led the way with 9 hours, then Morgantown at 8, Huntington with 7.75, and Inwood at 4.5 hours. Four of those counts covered more than 30 miles owling. Ona, with 70.5 miles, covered the most ground.

West Virginia state effort totals: By car: 4,985.75 miles in 576.75 hours. By foot: 328.75 miles in 382.25 hours.

Bird Reports

The avian groups in this report are listed in the order that reflects the 119th National Audubon's Christmas Bird Count seasonal checklist, and do not reflect the current American Ornithological Society checklist. Most species within these groups are listed in order of abundance. Not all families of birds observed during the count season are included.

Note: Only count day information is listed below unless otherwise noted.

Geese and Ducks: Canada Geese (6,931) were the third most-abundant species this count season, found on nineteen counts. A rarer Cackling Goose was reported on the Inwood count.

Sixteen species of ducks were reported this count season.

Dabblers: Mallards (2,306) were the most-numerous duck species and the eighth most-abundant state species, found on all twenty counts. American Black Ducks (87) were seen on ten counts. Other dabblers found included Gadwall (14), Wood Duck (10), and Green-winged Teal (9). Rarer this season were the 2 American Wigeon found on the Inwood CBC, and the single Northern Pintail located on the Charles Town count.

Dividing Ducks: Common Mergansers (323), found on eleven counts, were the most-abundant diver. The second most-numerous diving duck, found only on seven counts, was Bufflehead (179), with Morgantown having the high count of 93. Thirteen counts reported Hooded Mergansers (116). Three counts tallied Lesser Scaup (22): Ona (17), Charleston (6), and Pendleton County (count week). Four counts posted Ring-necked Duck (20): Charleston (10), Pipestem (8), Morgantown (2), and Pendleton County (count week). Three counts reported Ruddy Duck (12): Morgantown (7), Wheeling (3), and Charleston (2). Singletons this season were Canvasback, Parkersburg, Greater Scaup, Pocahontas County, and Common Goldeneye, Morgantown.

Game Birds: Seventeen counts saw Wild Turkey (511); the highest numbers reported came in from Charles Town (141), Morgantown (93), and Ona (92) counts. Only 6 Ruffed Grouse were reported. Canaan had 3 while Morgantown, Pendleton County, and Pocahontas County posted only single birds.

Loons and Grebes: The Pipestem Area posted the only Common Loons (4) in the state this season. Pied-billed Grebes (12) were on five counts; Oak Hill recorded the highest number with 5 birds. Single Horned Grebe reports came from Morgantown and Ona.

Cormorants and Herons: Double-crested Cormorants (8) were reported on four circles: Huntington (3), Pipestem (2), Wheeling (2), and Morgantown (1). Great Blue Herons (82) were found on sixteen counts; Hampshire County's 14 were the highest reported. Rarer, a lone Great Egret was found on the Pocahontas County count.

Vultures: Turkey Vultures (1,790) were prevalent on nineteen counts; Lewisburg had 390 of them, the state's high count. Black Vultures (864), noted on eighteen counts, continue their widespread distribution. Lewisburg reported an impressive 463 Black Vultures, the highest tallied in the state; a distant second were the 90 reported on the Pendleton County count.

Eagles and Hawks: The Golden Eagles (5) reported this season came in from the Pendleton (4) and the Pocahontas (1) County counts. Northern Harriers (16) were located in eight circles with Inwood's 6 the highest reported. Cooper's Hawks (44) were found on seventeen counts, outnumbering the Sharp-shinned Hawks (16) located on 8 counts. Sixteen counts posted Bald Eagles (93). Four of those CBCs had impressive eagle numbers: Hampshire County (22), Pipestem (16), Pendleton County (11), and the Moorefield count with 10 Bald Eagles.

Only 2 buteo species were reported this season. Red-tailed Hawks (283) were found on all twenty counts, with high counts from Inwood (52), Hampshire County (46), and Pendleton County (30). Seventeen counts reported Red-shouldered Hawk (159); high tallies were noted on the Charles Town (31) count while both the Huntington and Inwood counts reported 21 Red-shouldered Hawks.

Shorebirds: Four counts posted Killdeer (38), with Huntington reporting 29. The Pendleton County count discovered a Wilson's Snipe and a Spotted Sandpiper, the only other shorebirds found this season.

Gulls: Ring-billed Gull (78) was the only gull species found this season. Wheeling reported all but the one found on the Parkersburg count. The Pipestem Area count did report Ring-billed Gull during count week.

Owls: The most-abundant owl reported was Eastern Screech-Owl (41), with Inwood having the high count of 13. The Inwood count also reported seven of the Great Horned Owls (17). Twelve counts reported Barred Owls (12) this season. The three Northern Saw-whet Owls reports came in from Canaan (1) and Morgantown (2). Two rarer owls were reported: Moorefield's Barn Owl and Morgantown's Long-eared Owl.

Woodpeckers: Common on all counts were Red-bellied Woodpecker (657), Downy Woodpecker (657), Northern Flicker (348), and Pileated Woodpecker (249). Eighteen counts tallied Hairy Woodpecker (125), while fifteen circles saw or heard Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers (86). Always a good find, 9 Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported on five counts, while two other counts reported them as count week birds.

Falcons: American Kestrels (144) were sighted on nineteen counts. Merlins (7) were tallied on five counts, with Charleston reporting three while Elkins, Inwood, Morgantown, and the Pipestem Area counts all had single birds. Four counts noted Peregrine Falcons (7): Charleston (3), Huntington (2), and both the Athens-Princeton Area and Oak Hill counts posting one each. Parkersburg reported Peregrine Falcon during count week.

Flycatchers: Eastern Phoebes (27) were tallied this season on fourteen counts.

Vireos: A single White-eyed Vireo was found on the Morgantown CBC again this season, a rare find on a West Virginia CBC.

Corvids: The Charleston, Raleigh County, and Wheeling circles all have large crow roosts that normally reflect the substantial number of crows reported each count season in West Virginia. This season, although a significant number of crows that typically roost in the Wheeling circle apparently relocated, American Crow (29,245) was the top species recorded in the state. Fifteen counts tallied Common Raven (216), with the Hampshire (49) and Pendleton (40) County counts both reporting high numbers.

Thrushes and Mimids: All twenty counts tallied Eastern Bluebirds (1,031), making them the state's seventeenth most-prevalent species with high numbers reported from Huntington (134) and Hampshire County (122). Hermit Thrushes (58) were located on fifteen counts; Huntington tallied an impressive 17, the highest count tally. Most counts reported seeing American Robins (939) in low numbers. Elkins and Morgantown both located single Gray Catbirds and each of Canaan and Huntington recorded a Brown Thrasher.

Warblers: Three warbler species were spotted this season. Yellow-rumped Warblers (129), the most typical, were recorded in twelve circles, while only 3 Palm Warblers were found: Charleston (2) and Hampshire County (1). Rarer still, a lone Pine Warbler was recorded on the Pendleton County CBC.

Sparrows: Thirteen species of sparrow were found this season. Three sparrow species made the top twenty state list, with Dark-eyed Juncos (3,440) the fifth, White-

throated Sparrow (1,948) the tenth, and Song Sparrow (1,601) the twelfth most-reported species. Hampshire County reported very impressive numbers of Dark-eyed Junco (835), White-throated Sparrow (372), and Song Sparrow (181), high counts for all three species. Fox Sparrows (18) were located on seven counts, with Ona reporting 6, the highest. Rarer were the 2 Vesper Sparrows, 2 Savannah Sparrows, and single Lincoln's Sparrow found on the Morgantown count.

Blackbirds: Red-winged Blackbirds (430) were on six counts; Inwood tallied all but seven. Six counts noted Brown-headed Cowbirds (348), with Charles Town (213) reporting the most. Eight counts had Common Grackles (198); Inwood posted a high count of 177. Four counts reported finding Eastern Meadowlarks (58); Hampshire County located 38 of those. Rarer were the 17 Rusty Blackbirds tallied this season only by the Charles Town count.

Finches: The fifteenth most-reported species, American Goldfinch (1,174), was located on all counts. Pendleton County's 251 American Goldfinch tally was the highest by far. Pine Siskins (34) were noted on five counts; the highest tallies came in from Pendleton County (15) and Charles Town (10). Rarer were the thirty-six Evening Grosbeaks found: Canaan (33) and Pocahontas County (3).

Other noteworthy birds: Fourteen counts found Red-breasted Nuthatches (178), with Ona (44) reporting the greatest abundance. Ruby-crowned Kinglets (16) were tallied on nine counts. A very special, rare West Virginia Christmas Bird Count find was the male Painted Bunting on the Charles Town count!

For more information on West Virginia's Christmas Bird Counts and complete seasonal CBC data, go to the Brooks Bird Club website to learn where all the state circles are located, compiler contact information, and count dates (when available) for all twenty West Virginia counts. <http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/wv-cbc-results.html>.

This is my third year as the State Editor, and I would like to thank all the West Virginia state compilers for their dedication and all their hard work. Without the compilers and their participants, our state would not have been so well represented in this 119th winter bird survey.

Table 1

119th Christmas Bird Count - WV Counts (in order of number of species found)

CBC Count Code	CBC Count Name	Number of Species Found	Number of Field Participants	Parties		Total Hours Counting	Total Number of Birds Counted	Species Found in		Single Birds
				Max	Min			High Numbers	Low Numbers	
WVMC	McDowell County	42 ew-0	4	2	1	13.5	474	No high count species		8
WVRC	Raleigh County	43 ew-1	8	4	2	24	11,228	AMCR-10,500		8
WVEL	Elkins	47 ew-3	10	7	3	33	2,857	EUST-872; HOSP-340		7
WVAP	Athens-Princeton Area	50 ew-2	14	5	2	31	2,610	CANG-277; EUST-453; HOSP-288		5
WVCA	Canaan	50 ew-3	22	14	4	51.25	2,058	BCC-233; EUST-303; DEJU-166; HOSP-265		11
WVMF	Moorefield	51 ew-1	11	5	1	22.5	2,813	MALL-227; EUST-1,491		6
WVLE	Lewisburg	52 ew-0	12	12	1	49.5	4,043	CANG-460; BLVU-463; TUVU-390; MODO-372; EUST-753		7
WVOH	Oak Hill	52 ew-0	10	6	1	26	1,022	No high count species		10
WVWH	Wheeling	54 ew-0	14	9	2	43.5	12,230	CANG-262; TUVU-150; AMCR-9,000; EUST-501		6
WVPK	Parkersburg	55 ew-4	16	6	1	39	5,351	CANG-673; RODO-1045; MODO-402; EUST-1,249		8
WVPH	Poahontas	56 ew-1	9	6	3	36.5	1,846	CANG-310; EUST-260; DEJU-248		13
WVCH	Charleston	58 ew-0	21	9	1	45.25	11,149	CANG-751; RODO-499; AMCR-7,600; EUST-519		7
WVPA	Pipestem	59 ew-7	10	6	2	24	1,458	COME-230		7
WVCT	Charles Town	62 ew-0	25	9	2	60	7,405	CANG-1,561; MALL-388; EUST-2,302; DEJU-276; NOCA-287		7
WVHC	Hampshire County	62 ew-0	29	17	7	90.75	4,452	EUST-834; DEJU-835; WTSP-372		4
WVON	Ona	63 ew-0	18	7	5	57.5	4,438	CANG-462; MALL-227; EUST-723		7
WVHU	Huntington	66 ew-2	16	7	4	60.75	4,727	CANG-363; TUVU-141; EUST-1,289		4
WVIN	Inwood	67 ew-0	32	9	5	74.5	8,317	CANG-559; TUVU-290; MODO-483; EUST-3,339		5
WVPC	Pendleton County	67 ew-3	10	6	1	63.5	3,829	EUST-519; DEJU-475; AMGO-251		10
WVMO	Morgantown	77 ew-2	29	13	1	63	4,220	CANG-645; MALL-251; RODO-378; EUST-883		14

Table 2
The Most Widespread Species During the
119th Christmas Bird Count in WV

Species found on all twenty WV CBC Counts:

1. Mallard (2,306)
2. Red-tailed Hawk (283)
3. Rock Pigeon (4,552)
4. Mourning Dove (3,074)
5. Belted Kingfisher (89)
6. Red-bellied Woodpecker (657)
7. Downy Woodpecker (657)
8. Northern Flicker (348)
9. Pileated Woodpecker (249)
10. Blue Jay (1948)
11. American Crow (29,245)
12. Tufted Titmouse (1,254)
13. White-breasted Nuthatch (789)
14. Carolina Wren (1,341)
15. Golden-crowned Kinglet (395)
16. Eastern Bluebird (1031)
17. European Starling (16,699)
18. Dark-eyed Junco (3,440)
19. White-throated Sparrow (1,948)
20. Song Sparrow (1,606)
21. Northern Cardinal (2,393)
22. House Finch (561)
23. American Goldfinch (1,174)
24. House Sparrow (2,175)

Species found on 19 of the twenty WV CBC counts:

1. Canada Goose (6,931)
2. Turkey Vulture (1,790)
3. American Kestrel (144)
4. Northern Mockingbird (474)

Species found on 18 of the twenty WV CBC counts:

1. Hairy Woodpecker (125)
2. American Robin (939)

Species found on 17 of the twenty WV CBC counts:

1. Black Vulture (864)
2. Coopers Hawk (44)
3. Red-shouldered Hawk (159)
4. Field Sparrow (260)

Species found on 16 of the twenty WV CBC counts:

1. Wild Turkey (511)
2. Great Blue Heron (82)

3. Carolina Chickadee (1,079)
4. Brown Creeper (63)
5. Eastern Towhee (214)

Species found on 15 of the twenty WV CBC counts:

1. Bald Eagle (93)
2. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (86)
3. Common Raven (216)
4. Hermit Thrush (58)

Table 3

119th Christmas Bird Count - 2018-2019

Top 20 species found in WV (21 listed - BLJA and WTSP tied)

Alpha Code	Species	Total	Last Season	Difference
AMCR	American Crow	29,245	75,851	46,606-
EUST	European Starling	16,699	21,953	5,254-
CANG	Canada Goose	6,931	8,864	1,933-
ROPI	Rock Pigeon	4,552	4,055	497+
DEJU	Dark-eyed Junco	3,440	4,019	579-
MODO	Mourning Dove	3,074	2,453	621+
NOCA	Northern Cardinal	2,393	2,059	334+
MALL	Mallard	2,306	3,529	1,223-
HOSP	House Sparrow	2,175	2,154	21+
BLJA	Blue Jay	1,948	2,210	262-
WTSP	White-throated Sparrow	1,948	1,478	470+
TUVU	Turkey Vulture	1,790	1,133	657+
SOSP	Song Sparrow	1,606	1,364	242+
CARW	Carolina Wren	1,341	1,099	242+
TUTI	Tufted Titmouse	1,254	1,629	375-
AMGO	American Goldfinch	1,174	1,603	429-
CACH	Carolina Chickadee	1,079	1,247	168-
EABL	Eastern Bluebird	1,031	1,317	286-
AMRO	American Robin	939	12,170	11,231-
BLVU	Black Vulture	864	875	11-
WBNU	White-breasted Nuthatch	789	929	140-

Table 4

119th CBC - WV Species Found in Low Numbers (1-5) Includes Count Week Birds

One Found

Cackling Goose
Northern Pintail
Canvasback
Greater Scaup
Common Goldeneye
Great Egret
Wilson Snipe
Barn Owl
Long-eared Owl
White-eyed Vireo
Pine Warbler
Lincoln's Sparrow

Counts Located

Inwood
Charles Town
Parkersburg
Pocahontas County
Morgantown
Pocahontas County
Pendleton County
Moorefield
Morgantown
Morgantown
Pendleton County
Morgantown

Two Found

American Wigeon
Horned Grebe
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Vesper Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow

2-Inwood
1-Morgantown 1-Ona
1-Elkins, 1-Morgantown
1-Canaan, 1-Huntington
2-Morgantown
2-Morgantown

Three Found

Northern Saw-whet Owl
Palm Warbler

1-Canaan, 2-Morgantown
2-Charleston, 1-Hampshire County

Four Found

Common Loon

4-Pipestem

Five Found

Golden Eagle

4-Pendleton County, 1-Pocahontas County

1989 Louisa Ave.
Wheeling, WV 26003

One Hundred Twentieth Christmas Bird Count 2019–2020

L. E. Helgerman

This year the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be celebrating its one hundred twentieth year! It is the world's longest-running avian survey, starting back in 1900. Every CBC season starts in the current year and ends in the new year. This year will be 2019/2020 CBC season. The 120th season begins on December 14 and will run through January 5.

Those of us who have been participating for years know how the CBC works, but for those who are new, here's a quick rundown. CBC compilers (the count organizers) pick a day within the CBC season to conduct the bird survey. Though you can count birds anytime during that 24-hour period, most of the survey takes place in the roughly 10 hours of daylight that is available at that time of the year in West Virginia. Some eager participants also will get out in the early morning hours for a little nocturnal birding, looking for all those owls. Counting all the birds, with as many people the CBC compiler can coax into helping that day, is what it's all about! Coaxing, enticing, asking, pleading, at times begging; some compilers do whatever they can to get folks to help. The thing is, Christmas Bird Counts are easy, enjoyable, and can be a lot of fun to participate in. I'm really surprised that we're not having to turn birders away, but I'm sorry to say that's not the case. Many of the compilers here in West Virginia really do need our help.

Christmas Bird Counts are conducted in established areas throughout our state, across the North America, and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. Each count covers a 15-mile diameter circle, known as a CBC count circle. Though many parts of the circle on private property may not be accessible, there is still a lot of area to survey: each circle encompasses around 113,000 acres. The National Audubon Society would like at least ten participants on each CBC count, but really, that's not enough to cover so many acres. We can leave a lot of ground uncovered every year by not having enough birders. Every year I try to do what I can to help our compilers get more participants.

Warning! Christmas Bird Counts can be addicting! Many birders, as we all know, are a little bit competitive (you know who you are). Some birders can't help themselves; once they get their CBC feet wet, so to say, they will go out on three, four, five, or more counts in a season just for the bragging rights!

How many Christmas Bird Counts can you do this season? One is a good start, please help if and where you can. Thank you.

1989 Louisa Avenue
Wheeling, WV 26003

eBird Report: Spring March 1–May 31, 2019

Michael Slaven

The March–May period in 2019 presented diverse and numerous opportunities to birders, since the migration of ducks and shorebirds was slightly ahead of schedule and the diversity of warbler species in April were impressive as well. There were reports of some uncommon birds, such as a **Red-throated Loon** (*Gavia stellata*) early in March, a lingering **American White Pelican** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) at the same time, and a **Surf Scoter** (*Melanitta perspicillata*).

As winter slowly yielded, seemingly reluctantly, to spring, early migration began. Ducks and waterfowl were the focus of most attention during the blustery days of March, and when April began, the warblers began to turn up; first in a trickle, then by mid-April in a steady stream. The migration seemed, as has been the case for several years, to be ahead of schedule. I was so taken with this seeming acceleration of migration that I decided to undertake an informal snapshot of this year's warbler migration to compare with several historical accounts. First though, a brief recap of the early phase (March–April) of this year's warbler arrivals.

By the second week in March, the first-arriving warbler of the season, a **Louisiana Waterthrush** (*Parkesia motacilla*), was spotted on March 11, and a **Black-Throated Green Warbler** (*Setophaga virens*) was listed at the end of the month (March 30). In April, a proliferation of warbler species began to make their first-of-the-year (FOY) appearances. These FOY warblers included **Yellow-throated Warbler** (*Setophaga dominica*) on April 1, **Black-and-White Warbler** (*Mniotilta varia*) on April 8, **Hooded Warbler** (*Setophaga citrina*) and **Northern Parula** (*Setophaga americana*) on April 9, **Palm Warbler** (*Setophaga palmarum*) and **Yellow Warbler** (*Setophaga petechia*) on April 10, **American Redstart** (*Setophaga ruticilla*) on April 12, **Common Yellowthroat** (*Geothlypis trichas*) and **Blue-Winged Warbler** (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) on April 13, **Prairie Warbler** (*Setophaga discolor*) and **Black-Throated Blue Warbler** (*Setophaga caerulescens*) on April 16, **Cerulean Warbler** (*Setophaga cerulea*), **Northern Waterthrush** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*), and **Kentucky Warbler** (*Geothlypis formosa*) on April 18, **Blackburnian Warbler** (*Setophaga fusca*) and **Worm-Eating Warbler** (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) on April 19, **Chestnut-Sided Warbler** (*Setophaga pennsylvanica*), **Magnolia Warbler** (*Setophaga magnolia*), and **Swainson's Warbler** (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) on April 25, **Golden-winged Warbler** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) and **Wilson's Warbler** (*Cardellina pusilla*) on April 27, and **Canada Warbler** (*Cardellina canadensis*) on April 30.

When I was looking at these arrival dates, they seemed generally very early to me, an idea borne out by the filters that were developed by previous eBird reviewers over the years. Because eBird was used less in previous decades, I decided to look at the most trustworthy and accessible set of observations made by birders I could find, namely, this journal. After digging into the Field Notes section of *The Redstart* from October issues from the years 1979 (Phillips 1979), 1989 (Phillips 1989) and 1999 (Phillips 1999), I found a close correlation between arrival dates for first-of-year sightings of warblers between then and now, suggesting that migration for most warblers in early spring happened in roughly the same sequence of species as now, but tended to occur about a week earlier in 2019 than

it did as little as twenty years ago. A few species, such as Louisiana Waterthrush, were recorded in the state much earlier in recent years than in the older records I encountered, with the first sighting in 2019 coming a full month sooner than reports in 1999.

Of course, I looked at a very limited data set, and the field reports from the old issues of *The Redstart* were not written with this particular study in mind, and so I cannot claim this as a scientific study, but rather an anecdotal report based on the data that was available. It does not attempt to take into account short-term weather fluctuations, the number of raw observations conducted, the various locations in the state where reports were made, or numerous other possible complicating variables. Still, I think the general trend gives at least a general impression that migration is happening earlier, and that is, if not a cause for concern, at least a new factor that may have an impact on avian behavior, migratory patterns, and survival for birds that may reach breeding grounds too early in the season to find adequate food supplies. On the other hand, earlier arrivals may show adaptability to earlier spring leaf-out and accompanying emergence of invertebrates as temperatures grow warmer.

The chart below identifies warbler species whose FOY information was recorded in *The Redstart* in 1999 and from eBird in 2020. The chart shows the arrival dates of many species of warblers, and the trend that I have observed by sifting through the intervening years in eBird records. The chart does not include the information I obtained for 1979 and 1989, because the field notes from those articles do not specifically always give the date for first-of-year arrivals, or have too few specific dates to be useful for the specific issue of arrival dates.

WEST VIRGINIA Species	FOY Warbler Sightings		TRENDS OVER TIME
	2019	1999	
Louisiana Waterthrush	3/11	4/18	much earlier
Black-throated Green Warbler	3/30	4/19	much earlier
Yellow-throated Warbler	4/01	3/21	later
Black-and-white Warbler	4/08	4/10	earlier
Hooded Warbler	4/09	4/18	earlier
Northern Parula	4/09	4/11	marginally earlier
Yellow Warbler	4/10	4/18	earlier
American Redstart	4/12	4/18	earlier
Common Yellowthroat	4/13	4/18	earlier
Prairie Warbler	4/16	4/22	earlier
Black-throated Blue Warbler	4/16	5/05	much earlier
Kentucky Warbler	4/18	4/25	earlier
Worm-eating Warbler	4/19	4/18	marginally earlier
Golden-winged Warbler	4/27	4/25	marginally earlier

The information yielded from the chart shows that the spring migration of 1999 was later (by more than a week) than that of 2020. Of course, it is perilous to make large generalizations about small data samples, but there seems to at least be a compelling reason to drill down into the data to make a better assessment of the changing face of migration. An informal examination of eBird shows a general trend for migration to occur earlier every year. This varies according to species, but if the trend continues at this rate, migration and breeding success for migrant birds could be deeply impacted in the coming

decades. Coming in the next issue, I hope to explore the summer shorebird season in 2019 and compare it to historic trends for shorebird migration over the last years. Until then, I hope you have happy days in the field, and find the bird that is on your “most wanted” list.

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Field Notes

Spring Season

March 1 – May 31, 2019

Casey Rucker

After a cool and dry March in West Virginia, April and May were both warmer and damper than average, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University. May was the eighth warmest on record.

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

State review list **Whimbrels** appeared near the Ohio River in May. Janet Keating, Michael Griffith, Joshua Holland, and Rennie Talbert saw 22 **Whimbrels** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, on May 19, and four days later Joshua Holland found a pair of **Whimbrels** at Harris Riverfront Park in Huntington, Cabell County. During the spring season 232 species were reported in West Virginia. Distribution of bird reports improved slightly from the year before, with 41 of 55 counties contributing to our state’s avian lore. Birds found 35 species of warbler during the spring season.

Geese, Swans, and Ducks – It was a sparse spring for **geese** and **swans**. Terry Bronson spotted a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the Williamstown waterfront in Wood County; the bird was present from May 29 to 31. **Canada Geese** remained in, or returned to, their usual haunts throughout West Virginia. Terry Bronson observed a pair of **Mute Swans** at Sycamore Pond, Pleasants County, on March 5, and a lone **Mute Swan** on March 12 at McClintic Wildlife Management Area, Mason County, where the bird apparently lingered through May 14 (JsH, JHu). Frederick Atwood observed **Tundra Swans** at a farm pond near Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County, on March 2. The March 16 Mountaineer Audubon

spring waterfowl visit to Cheat Lake, Monongalia County, featured a flyover by calling **Tundra Swans**, as reported by Derek Courtney.

Duck sightings in West Virginia continued last spring's encouraging results. Notable for scarcity were **scoters**: the only report was of two **Surf Scoters** at the Beech Fork Lake Marina in Wayne County on March 9, as observed by David Patick, Gary Rankin, Janet Keating, Michael Griffith, and Amy and Rennie Talbert. There were many reports statewide of **Wood Ducks**, **Mallards**, **Ring-necked Ducks**, **Greater and Lesser scaup**, **Buffleheads**, and **Common Mergansers**. The following **ducks** were reported in five-to-ten counties during the spring: **Blue-winged Teal**, **Gadwalls**, **American Wigeons**, **American Black Ducks**, **Canvasbacks**, **Redheads**, **Common Goldeneyes**, **Hooded Mergansers**, and **Ruddy Ducks**. The following species were only reported in the counties listed: **Northern Shovelers** in Cabell (TB), Mason (DP), and Mercer (JP); **Northern Pintails** in Cabell (TB), Grant (FA), and Hardy (FA); **Green-winged Teal** in Mason (TB) and Wood (TB); **Long-tailed Ducks** in Grant (FA), Hardy (DaG), and Jefferson (BH); and **Red-breasted Mergansers** in Hardy (DaG), Monongalia (DCo), and Wood (TB).

Grouse and Turkeys – Birders throughout the state reported **Wild Turkeys**, while reports of **Ruffed Grouse** came only from Pocahontas (DP), Randolph (HMy), and Tucker (SO, HMy, CR) Counties.

Grebes – Birders reported **Pied-billed Grebes** and **Horned Grebes** in seven counties each. Jon Benedetti found **Red-necked Grebes** near Sycamore Pond, Pleasants County, on March 8.

Pigeons and Doves – **Rock Pigeons** and **Mourning Doves** continued to reside throughout the state. **Eurasian Collared-Doves** were as usual in the vicinity of Union, Monroe County (JeH), but also were seen in Martinsburg, Berkeley County, for a week in mid-April (BSe). Susan Shive discovered and photographed a **White-winged Dove** at her home in Ritchie County on April 29.

Cuckoos – **Cuckoos** apparently arrived somewhat later this year than last, and sightings were sparse. **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** began to arrive throughout the state beginning May 2 in Wood County (JB) and appeared in five counties, while **Black-billed Cuckoos** appeared beginning on May 3, as observed by Kitty Bailey near Hillsboro, Pocahontas County, and reports came from six counties.

Goatsuckers and Swifts – **Common Nighthawk** sightings were vanishingly scarce, with reports only from Cabell (JsH, JHu), Mason (DP), and Putnam (KK) Counties. On May 4 Joshua Holland and Bryan Smith found a **Chuck-will's-widow** once again present at Mt. Zion Cemetery, Cabell County. Kevin Campbell reported a **Chuck-will's-widow** or two near Parkersburg, Wood County, for the third year in a row beginning on April 24. **Eastern Whip-poor-wills** and **Chimney Swifts** were widely represented throughout the state. Kevin Campbell heard his first **Eastern Whip-poor-will** of the spring in Wood County on April 13, the first reported in the state. Joette Borzik observed the first **Chimney Swifts** reported this spring on the same day in Jefferson County, and relayed a report of the species from Berkeley County on the same day.

Hummingbirds – **Ruby-throated Hummingbirds** began arriving very early this spring, with the first sighting on March 14 by Jeff Hajenga at his home near Athens, Mercer County, and appearances in reports from 18 counties throughout the state.

Rails and Coots – Steven Wilson found a **Virginia Rail** at Muddlety wetland, Nicholas County, on March 31. At Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area (WMA),

Cabell County, Joshua Holland and Janet Keating spotted a **Virginia Rail** on April 10 and the bird continued to be observed through May 4 (JsH, JK, MG).

On March 26 Hannah Clipp heard a **Sora** at the West Virginia Botanic Garden, Monongalia County; on April 10 Joshua Holland and Janet Keating observed a **Sora** at Green Bottom WMA, Cabell County, and the bird apparently remained through May 14 (JHu). Joshua Holland spotted a **Common Gallinule** in the same location on May 12. **American Coot** reports were scanty as usual this spring, coming only from five counties.

Cranes – On April 27, Amy and Rennie Talbert observed a **Sandhill Crane** calling and circling above Beech Fork Lake, Wayne County.

Plovers – Joshua Holland and Janet Keating encountered four **Black-bellied Plovers** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, on May 17. **Semipalmated Plovers** appeared in Mason (MG, JK), Randolph (RBo), and Summers (JP) Counties. **Killdeer** reports were down a bit, coming from 12 counties.

Sandpipers – Fourteen **sandpiper** species made appearances in the Mountain State. **Whimbrels** appeared in Cabell and Mason Counties in May, as described near the beginning of these notes. **American Woodcocks** and **Spotted** and **Solitary sandpipers** were reported in at least six counties. The following species were reported in five or fewer counties, as listed: **Stilt Sandpipers** in Mason (JsH, JK, MG); **Dunlin** in Hardy (DaG); **Least Sandpipers** in Jefferson (LF), Mason (JK, MG, JsH), and Pocahontas (DP); **White-rumped Sandpipers** in Hardy (DaG) and Mason (MG, JK); **Pectoral Sandpipers** in Hardy (DaG) and Mason (JsH, MG, JK); **Semipalmated Sandpipers** in Cabell (JsH), Kanawha (HG), and Mason (JsH, ReT, MG); **Wilson’s Snipe** in Cabell (JsH, DP, GR, MG, JK) and Mason (JsH); **Lesser Yellowlegs** in Cabell (JsH, MG, JK), Hardy (DaG), and Mason (JsH, MG, JK); **Greater Yellowlegs** in Marion (DCo), Mason (JsH), and Wayne (ReT); and **Red-necked Phalarope** in Mason (MG, JK, JsH).



Photographs of Whimbrel by Josh Holland

Gulls and Terns – Sightings of **Bonaparte’s Gulls** came from Hardy (DaG), Jefferson (DHa), Kanawha (RG), and Mason (JsH, MG, JK) Counties. On April 14, Aaron Graham watched a **Laughing Gull** flying around Hogueland Lane, Grant County. **Ring-billed Gulls** were reported in seven counties, and **Herring Gulls** appeared in Kanawha (RG), Mason (TB, JsH), and Wood (TB) Counties.

There were few **tern** sightings this season. Richard Gregg found a **Caspian Tern** at

Belle, Kanawha County, on April 15, and on April 30 he saw a **Forster's Tern** at the same location. On May 5 Diane Holsinger spotted **Caspian** and **Forster's terns** at Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County. John Hubbard and Derrick Kolling found a **Common Tern** during their big day on May 14 in Cabell, Mason, and Wayne Counties.

Loons – On March 2, Frederick Atwood discovered a **Red-throated Loon** at Broad Run Lake in Pendleton County, as well as another **Red-throated Loon** at Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County, which remained at least until March 5 (JsH, DaG). **Common Loon** reports came from Kanawha (RG), Mason (JsH, MG, JK), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Cormorants – West Virginia birders reported **Double-crested Cormorants** in only six counties this spring.

Pelicans – The **American White Pelican** that appeared in mid-February in Pleasants and Wood Counties remained at Sycamore Pond, Pleasants County, through March 15 (TB, JB, JBT).

Hérons and Egrets – It was a fair season for **heron** and **egret** diversity. On May 9, Bryan Smith found a **Least Bittern** at the goose ponds near Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, after a report from Michael Griffith and Joshua Holland the day before. **Great Blue Herons** appeared widely, while **Great Egrets** were observed in Cabell (MG), Hardy (DaG), Kanawha (RG), and Pleasants (JB) Counties. Carol Del-Colle saw five **Great Blue Herons** at a rookery near Millville, Jefferson County, on March 28. **Green Herons** appeared widely. A juvenile **Black-crowned Night-Heron** lingered at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, from April 7 to 19 (JsH, JK, MG), and Joshua Holland spotted an adult **Black-crowned Night-Heron** at Green Bottom WMA, Cabell County, on May 12. Hulett Good watched a **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** fishing on the Elk River near Big Chimney, Kanawha County, on May 1, constituting the third county record for the species.

Vultures – Birders in eight West Virginia counties reported seeing **Black Vultures**, while **Turkey Vulture** reports came from seventeen counties.

Hawks and Eagles – **Osprey** were reported throughout the state, beginning on March 15 when James Triplett watched a *nesting Osprey* at Stonewall Jackson Lake, Lewis County. **Golden Eagle** reports were more widespread than usual, coming from Grant (FA), Pendleton (MWi), Summers (JP), and Tucker (EG) Counties. **Northern Harriers** appeared in reports from Grant County (FA), Hardy County (DaG), Jefferson County (WS, DHa), Summers County (JP), and Tucker County (AD, SO). **Accipiter** reports were sparse as usual, with **Sharp-shinned Hawks** observed only in Jefferson (DHa), Ritchie (CB), and Tucker (CR) Counties, and **Cooper's Hawks** in Jefferson (BH), Kanawha (HG), Monongalia (KF), Putnam (KK), Summers (JP), and Wood (JB) Counties. On March 19, Randy Bodkins saw and heard a very vocal **Northern Goshawk** at Stuart Recreation Area, Randolph County. David Smith watched a soaring **Mississippi Kite** near Romney, Hampshire County, on May 26. Reports of **Bald Eagles**, **Red-shouldered Hawks**, **Broad-winged Hawks**, and **Red-tailed Hawks** were widespread in West Virginia this spring. The twelfth Spring Eagle Survey on March 2 found 34 **Bald Eagles** and one **Golden Eagle** in Greenbrier, Monroe, and Summers Counties, as reported by James Phillips. Thomas Fox observed a male **Bald Eagle** feeding a female *on the nest* in Gilmer County on March 18.

Owls – **Owl** reports were down compared to the prior spring season. On March 7 Scott Mullens saw a **Barn Owl** near Belleville wetlands, Wood County, as reported by

Terry Bronson. Birders reported **Eastern Screech-Owls** in Pendleton (FA), Tucker (CR), and Wayne (GR) Counties, as well as in a big day in Cabell and Mason Counties (JHu). **Great Horned Owls** inspired reports in Putnam (KC), Ritchie (CB), Wayne (GR), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties, and birders reported **Barred Owls** in ten West Virginia counties.

Kingfishers – Belted Kingfisher reports were widespread in West Virginia this season, with reports from eleven counties.

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

Falcons – Herb Myers spotted four **American Kestrels** in Pendleton County on March 4. Additional **American Kestrel** reports were scarce this spring, coming only from Hardy (DaG), Kanawha (HG), Pocahontas (PM), Randolph (LB), Tucker (SO), and Wood (TB) Counties, while **Merlins** were spotted only in Kanawha County (HG), Randolph County (Rbi), and Tucker County (HMy). **Peregrine Falcon** sightings came from Jefferson (DHa), Mason (JsH), Ohio (DK), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties.

Flycatchers – Reports of **flycatchers** were somewhat sparse this spring. First-reported dates, counties, and observers are listed in parentheses: **Great Crested Flycatchers** (April 19, Cabell, MG), **Eastern Kingbirds** (April 19, Mason, JsH, JK), **Eastern Wood-Pewees** (April 27, Wood, JB), **Acadian Flycatchers** (May 1, Cabell, JK, MG), **Alder Flycatchers** (May 12, Tucker, CR), **Willow Flycatchers** (May 4, Cabell, JsH), **Least Flycatchers** (April 24, Cabell, JsH), and **Eastern Phoebes** (March 13, Berkeley, WH).

Shrikes – On May 16, Richard Bailey reported **Loggerhead Shrikes** in the Greenbrier Valley, Greenbrier and Monroe Counties.

Vireos – Our five breeding **vireos** returned to nesting grounds throughout the state beginning on the dates listed, along with counties and observers: **White-eyed** (April 13, Wayne, ReT), **Yellow-throated** (April 11, Wayne, JK, MG), **Blue-headed** (March 30, Wayne, DP, MG), **Warbling** (April 19, Mason, MG), and **Red-eyed** (April 17, Wayne, MG). On April 27, Jon Benedetti and the Mountwood Bird Club spied a **Philadelphia Vireo** at McDonough Wildlife Refuge, Wood County.

Crows, Jays, and Ravens – **Blue Jays**, **American Crows**, and **Common Ravens** were reported widely throughout the state. **Fish Crows** were reported in Berkeley (JV), Hardy (DaG), and Jefferson (DHa, JBz) Counties. Joey Herron saw **Common Ravens** *nesting* on a trestle at Prickett's Fort State Park, Marion County, on April 3, and Deborah Hale and her son spotted a *fledgling* **Common Raven** at Nash Farm, Jefferson County, on May 2.

Larks – Josh Holland and Bryan Smith found a **Horned Lark** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, during their big day on May 4. David Patick spotted three **Horned Larks** on Leon Ferry Road, Mason County, on May 30.

Swallows – **Bank Swallows** appeared only in Mason County (JsH, JK, JHu), beginning on April 10. **Tree Swallows** had already made appearances in West Virginia at the end of February, and **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** arrived on March 26 in Cabell County (MG); both species appeared widely. **Purple Martins** began to arrive on March 28 in Wood County (JB), and were also reported in Jefferson (LF, JBz, DHe), Kanawha (HG, RG), Mason (JsH), Pleasants (JB), Summers (JJP), and Tucker (MK, SKi) Counties. **Barn Swallows** were spotted by James and Judy Phillips on March 15 in

both Monroe and Summers Counties, and made widespread returns to West Virginia this spring. Joshua Holland found **Cliff Swallows** at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on April 8, and **Cliff Swallows** also inspired reports from Kanawha (RG, HG), Summers (JJP), and Wood (TB) Counties.

Chickadees and **Titmice** – **Black-capped** and **Carolina chickadees** were reported in their usual habitats in West Virginia this spring.

Nuthatches – In accordance with their biennial irruption pattern, **Red-breasted Nuthatches** appeared widely this spring, along with the reliable **White-breasted Nuthatch**.

Creepers – **Brown Creeper** reports were few once again this season, coming from only seven counties.

Wrens – **House** and **Carolina wrens** appeared in good numbers in reports from all over the state. Bruni Haydl found an early **House Wren** inspecting a nest box on April 12 at her home in Charles Town, Jefferson County. **Winter Wrens** were reported in Grant (FA), Kanawha (KC), Pendleton (CR), Randolph (HMy), Tucker (HMy, CR), and Wayne (GR) Counties. Darrell Good discovered a **Marsh Wren** at Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County, on March 25.

Gnatcatchers – Rodney Bartgis found an early **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** on March 29 in Valley Bend, Randolph County. Otherwise, **Blue-gray Gnatcatchers** began returning during the second week of April to breeding grounds throughout the state.

Kinglets – Birders reported **Golden-crowned Kinglets** in seven West Virginia counties, and **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** in eleven counties during the season.

Thrushes – It was a fair spring for **thrush** reports in West Virginia, where only our six breeding species were found. **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Wood Thrushes**, and **American Robins** were seen throughout most reporting counties. On May 16 Paul McKay counted fourteen **Wood Thrushes** on his farm in Ohio County. **Veeries** were reported in Pocahontas (RBi), Preston (LeJ), Randolph (HMy, RBi), Tucker (CR), and Webster (KK) Counties; **Swainson's Thrush** reports surprisingly came only from Cabell (MG, JK), Pocahontas (DP, RBi), and Tucker (CR) Counties; and **Hermit Thrushes** were reported from Jackson (TB), Marion (AW), Pocahontas (DP, RBi), Randolph (RBi), Roane (DG), Tucker (SO, HMy, CR), and Wayne (GR) Counties.

Catbirds, **Thrashers**, and **Mockingbirds** – During the spring season **Gray Catbirds**, **Brown Thrashers**, and **Northern Mockingbirds** once again serenaded their breeding grounds in West Virginia.

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

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwings** were relatively scarce this spring, with reports only from Hampshire (DSm), Jefferson (DHa), Kanawha (RG), Ohio (PM), Pocahontas (RBi), Randolph (RBi), and Tucker (CR, HMy) Counties, plus one multi-county report (JHu).

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

Finches and **Allies** – Herb Myers saw seven **Evening Grosbeaks** in Dry Fork, Randolph County, on April 10. **Evening Grosbeaks** also continued in Summers County (JJP), as well as Tucker County, where the editor of these notes observed our two **grosbeak** species side-by-side on his porch on April 25. **House** and **Purple finches**, **Pine Siskins**, and **American Goldfinches** appeared in reports throughout the state. On March 2, Frederick Atwood saw a flyover **Red Crossbill** in Pendleton County.

Sparrows, Juncos, and Towhees – Michael Griffith and Gary Rankin discovered a **Lark Sparrow** at Gallipolis Ferry, Mason County, on May 18. Thirteen other **sparrow** species made appearances in accustomed haunts throughout our state. Wilma Jarrell saw three **American Tree Sparrows** at Fairview Ridge, Wetzel County, on March 14, and four in the same location on March 28; Darrell Good spotted three **American Tree Sparrows** at Kimsey Run Dam, Hardy County, on March 25. **Fox Sparrows** made appearances only during March, in Monongalia (DCo) and Summers (JP) Counties, and widely reported **White-throated** and **White-crowned sparrows** stayed through mid-May. Resident and returning **sparrow** species made first appearances this season in reports from the following counties: **Grasshopper** on April 25 in Jefferson (DHa), **Chipping** on March 15 in Wetzel (WJ), **Field** on March 10 in Fayette (WP), **Dark-eyed Junco** on March 2 in Summers (JP), **Vesper** on April 8 in Mason (JsH, JK, MG), **Savannah** on March 28 in Jefferson (DHa), **Song** on March 2 in Summers (JP), and **Swamp** on March 7 in Wood (TB). **Eastern Towhees** were already present in some areas at the start of the spring season, and by its end were reported from throughout the state.

Chats – **Yellow-breasted Chats** first appeared on April 28 on a ridge of Wayne County, as reported by Michael Griffith, and by the end of the season had also appeared in Braxton (WG), Cabell (JK, MG), Kanawha (RG), Raleigh (MAW), and Wood (JB) Counties.

Blackbirds and Allies – **Bobolinks** returned to six reporting counties, with a first appearance on April 24 at Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, as observed by Joshua Holland. There were many West Virginia reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks**, **Orchard** and **Baltimore orioles**, **Red-winged Blackbirds**, **Brown-headed Cowbirds**, and **Common Grackles**. On March 11, Cynthia Burkhart spotted the first **Eastern Meadowlark** she had seen in 39 years at her home in Ritchie County. **Rusty Blackbirds** appeared only in reports from Ohio (PM), Randolph (SKi), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (TB) Counties.

Warblers – On May 15, Derek Courtney saw and listened to a singing **Connecticut Warbler** on the West Virginia University campus, Monongalia County. The following **warblers**, all regular migrants through or breeders in West Virginia, made their first-of-season appearances in the following counties: **Ovenbird**: April 9, Wayne (JsH), **Worm-Eating Warbler**: April 21, Wayne (JK, MG), **Louisiana Waterthrush**: March 27, Summers (JP), **Northern Waterthrush**: March 29, Monongalia (SO), **Golden-winged Warbler**: May 1, Raleigh (MAW), **Blue-winged Warbler**: April 19, Cabell (JsH, JK), **Black-and-white Warbler**: April 9, Wayne (JsH), **Prothonotary Warbler**: April 16, Jefferson (JBz), **Swainson's Warbler**: May 1, Raleigh (MAW), **Tennessee Warbler**: April 30, Cabell (JK, MG), **Nashville Warbler**: April 24, Cabell (JsH), **Mourning Warbler**: May 12, Tucker (CR), **Kentucky Warbler**: April 27, Wood (JB), **Common Yellowthroat**: April 7, Wood (DJE), **Hooded Warbler**: April 9, Wayne (JsH), **American Redstart**: April 13, Kanawha (KC), **Cape May Warbler**: May 1, Jefferson (DHa), **Cerulean Warbler**: April 19, Mason (JsH, JK), **Northern Parula**: April 9, Wayne (JsH), **Magnolia Warbler**: April 28, Wayne (MG), **Bay-breasted Warbler**: April 30, Cabell (JK, MG), **Blackburnian Warbler**: April 25, Cabell (JsH), **Yellow Warbler**: April 11, Wood (JB), **Chestnut-sided Warbler**: April 25, Cabell (JsH), **Blackpoll Warbler**: April 30, Cabell (JK, MG), **Black-throated Blue Warbler**: April 27, Wood (JB), **Palm Warbler**: April 10, Cabell (JsH), **Pine Warbler**: March 5, Wayne (JsH),

Yellow-rumped Warbler: March 2, Kanawha (HG), **Yellow-throated Warbler:** April 3, Pendleton (RBo), **Prairie Warbler:** April 13, Mason (DP), **Black-throated Green Warbler:** March 30, Wayne (DP, MG), **Canada Warbler:** May 4, Pocahontas (DP), and **Wilson's Warbler:** May 1, Wayne (JK, MG). Twenty-two of these **warbler** species appeared before the "first-seen" dates in George A. Hall's *West Virginia Birds*, with two ties. On March 28, Wil Hershberger listened to four **Pine Warblers** singing in his neighborhood in Hedgesville, Berkeley County. Mindy and Allen Waldron, helping out with the New River Birding and Nature Festival, found nineteen **warbler** species in Raleigh County on May 1.

Tanagers, Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Buntings – **Summer Tanager** reports were up a bit this spring, coming from Cabell (JsH), Calhoun (TF), Kanawha (HG), Wayne (MG, GR), and Wood (TB) Counties. Eighteen counties hosted sightings of returning **Scarlet Tanagers**, the first of which was spotted by Janet Keating and Michael Griffith in Wayne County on April 21. **Northern Cardinals, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Indigo Buntings** prompted numerous reports from birders in most parts of the state. Wendy Perrone spotted the first **Indigo Bunting** of the season at her feeders in Hinton, Summers County, on April 21. **Blue Grosbeaks** were the subjects of reports from Hardy (DH), Jefferson (DHa), Mason (JsH, JK, MG), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (TB) Counties. Joshua Holland spotted a **Dickcissel** in Southside, Mason County, on May 10.

Contributors to the Spring Field Notes: Frederick Atwood (FA), Richard Bailey (RBi), Jon Benedetti (JB), Randy Bodkins (RBo), Joette Borzik (JBz), Luanne Bowers (LB), Terry Bronson (TB), Cynthia Burkhardt (CB), Kevin Cade (KC), Derek Courtney (DCo), Andrea Dalton (AD), Dick and Jeannette Esker (DJE), Katie Fallon (KF), Tom Fox (TF), Laura Frazier (LF), Elaine George (EG), Darrell Good (DaG), Donny Good (DG), Hullet Good (HG), LeJay Graffious (LeJ), Willa Grafton (WG), Richard Gregg (RG), Michael Griffith (MG), Jeff Hajenga (JeH), Deborah Hale (DHa), Bruni Haydl (BH), Don Henry (DHe), Wil Hershberger (WH), Joshua Holland (JsH), Diane Holsinger (DH), John Hubbard (JHu), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), Kim Kazmierski (KK). Janet Keating (JK), Mimi Kibler (MK), Stephen Kimbrell (SKi), Debbie Koegler (DK), Paul McKay (PM), Herb Myers (HMy), Susan Olcott (SO), David Patick (DP), Wendy Perrone (WP), James Phillips (JP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), Casey Rucker (CR), Robert Sebring (BSe), David Smith (DSm), N. Wade Snyder (WS), Rennie and Amy Talbert (ReT), James Triplett (JT), James and Beverly Triplett (JBT), Joshua Vance (JV), Andy Weaks (AW), Mindy and Allen Waldron (MAW), and Michael Willenborg (MWi).

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