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Figure 2: Leafcutting Bee (*Megachile* sp.) removing a disk from the leaf of a spice bush.

Figure 3: Mason Bee (Megachilidae) emerging from nest tube.

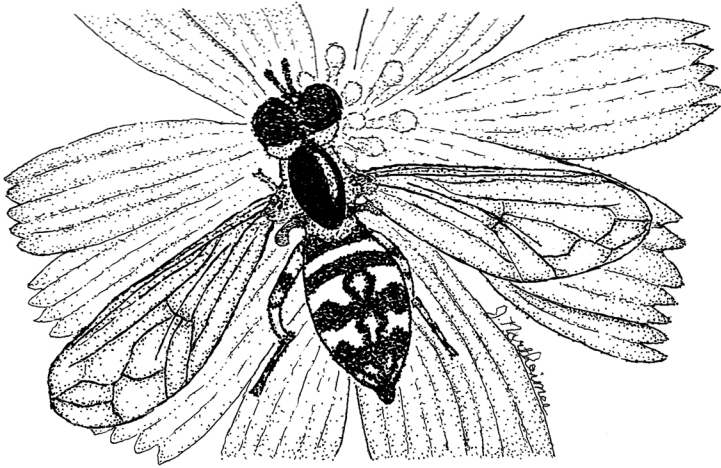


Figure 4: Flower Fly Feeding on Pollen—Eastern Calligrapher (*Toxomerus geminatus*).

Enhancing Amphibian and Reptile Habitat. We have observed amphibians and reptiles, some with increasing frequency as yard quality has improved. We were surprised to find Ravine Salamanders (*Plethodon richmondi*) in what was such a disturbed and sterile landscape. We leave a border of leaves around the yard and have found the salamanders when removing leaf cover in the fall, winter, and early spring. Green and Pauley (1987) describe the importance of leaf cover for Ravine Salamanders when they are active at the ground surface from early fall through late spring. Our back yard has a chain link fence but Eastern Box Turtles (*Terrapene carolina carolina*) dig under the fence and we have found them in our yard over the years. There is enough cover—loose soil and woody debris—that they could be residents. We have also watched them go through or under the fence to neighboring yards. We found a Black Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*) sunning in a garden bed. A shed Black Rat Snake skin was found on the front steps. The benefit of having this species is that it should produce a balance in rodent numbers. Mossy rock walls with openings and free-stacked stone walls provide habitat and basking areas for Five-lined Skinks (*Eumeces fasciatus*).

Enhancing Bird Habitat. We have several nest boxes, a nesting platform, and a gourd in the yard. Cavity nesting bird species using the nest boxes include Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*), Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*), and Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*). The gourd has been used for three summers by Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*), which have also nested in a wood pile. House Finches (*Haemorhous mexicanus*), Northern Cardinals (*Cardinalis cardinalis*), and Song Sparrows (*Melospiza melodia*) have nested on house fixtures, in shrubs, and in evergreens. This spring a pair of cardinals worked on building a nest that was then claimed and finished by American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*), our first nesting by this species. Downy Woodpeckers (*Dryobates pubescens*) have not nested in but do occasionally enlarge the holes on the nest boxes. Leaving stumps and trunks of dead trees in place provides foraging areas for woodpeckers. (Tunnel nesting bees—leafcutting and mason bees—have also used the stumps and dead tree trunks).

Special Circumstances

There are certain specific circumstances that alter the landscape, affecting animal population and distribution and plant growth. These effects are primarily due to human actions including removal of mature trees without replacement, fragmenting suburban forests, increasing areas covered by structures, and maintaining artificially high populations of certain animal species, but also include weather events.

Urban Associated Non-native Bird Species. Several events have impacted habitat structure of the area surrounding our yard. The derecho of 2012 had direct and indirect impacts. Some larger trees were felled by the strong winds, thinning tracts of woods. Afterward, many homeowners (particularly those who experienced some property damage) initiated preemptive tree removal to provide a treeless border around buildings. Tree removal continued two summers ago when all the trees in our area that are near power lines were trimmed and several large, healthy trees seen as threats were removed by residents. Over the time we have lived here, some of the largest, healthiest trees have been removed by homeowners who thought they might fall on structures. Coupled with an increase in lawn area, decks, and parking areas, this could have created a tipping point for the appearance or disappearance of certain species—benefiting some, while hurting others. When we first moved here, we frequently heard and saw Barred Owls (*Strix varia*) in our yard and in a nearby forested area. We do not hear the Barred Owls as often now. This loss may be the result of the removal of several large trees in the forested area.

We experienced the first occurrence of Rock Doves (*Columba livia*) in the areas bordering our immediate neighborhood following these landscape changes. Melles, Glenn, and Martin (2003) found that increasing impervious surface cover in combination with fewer trees resulted in dominance by urban species that included House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), European Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and Rock Doves. Northeimer (2009) found that non-native species have a particular threshold of appearance based on the level of urbanization including tree cover and pattern of development. Even though we are approaching some of these thresholds at our location, we have not yet observed Rock Doves at our feeders or in our yard, although we do see a flock flying nearby from time to time. So far no House Sparrows have been observed in our yard or at our feeders. In May 2021 we heard and observed a House Sparrow in the neighborhood adjoining ours—the first in the mile and a half circle that we walk frequently.

Accordingly, it is important to maintain not only a certain level of forest cover but also to control the pattern or configuration of development. Generally, the process of urbanization causes habitat fragmentation with larger tracts of open land and a reduction in interior forest area. Large forest tracts are eliminated with remnants occurring as row-like stands or isolated patches. Some areas develop in a block-like pattern with structures occurring in rows. Overall, trees are not being planted to replace those lost. When replacements do occur, they are often non-native, ornamental species.

Impacts from Animals. Certain features of suburban yards, other than physical elements, can serve as sinks for animal populations. Belaire, Whelan, and Minor (2014) found that outdoor cats, dogs, use of insecticides, invasive species, and other predators have a negative effect. Feral cats (*Felis catus*) are a problem in our area with numbers increasing recently, especially next door to us. We have seen them catching chipmunks and stalking birds and we know that they visit our yard. Some domesticated cats are allowed to roam in our neighborhood, which exacerbates the problem.

Some wild species can also be a problem when these occur in large numbers without the normal checks of predation and competition that come from ecological diversity. White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) are ubiquitous in our neighborhood. Herd sizes as large as 11 have been observed. The destructive power of this overpopulation is visible in shrub browse lines where all limbs up to five feet have been removed. Stunted growth is seen in low shrubs and bedding plants. We have successfully eliminated deer from our back yard through a combination of physical barriers and spray repellents. The results have been dramatic in the flowering and growth of plants. Gray Squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) are also highly destructive to small trees and shrubs by removing strips of bark, sometimes girdling small branches. Raccoons (*Procyon lotor*) and opossums (*Didelphis marsupialis*) disturb and uproot plants and turf. The raccoons do eat harmful grubs, so their visits provide a mixed benefit.

Does It Make a Difference?

Urban spread and disruption of the ecology in areas surrounding cities has been in progress for decades. There certainly has to be a better way. Does rehabilitating a small plot have an improving effect on suburban ecology regardless of scale? Is it a population sink or a benefit? We found that it certainly improves the immediate ecological condition of the yard on which the rehabilitation occurs.

The issue of scale, or the size of areas that is needed to provide necessary conditions for native species to thrive, has been addressed in studies of the impact of urbanization on the landscape. Forest reserves within the urban environment, even when surrounded by areas of low to moderate urbanization, can support certain forest-dependent species (Northeimer 2009). The larger the area the more likely this achievement will occur (Donnelly and Marzluff 2004). However, contiguous or nearby rehabilitated residential yards may address the issue of scale. Belaire, Whelan, and Minor (2014) demonstrated that “the aggregated effect of individual yard design and management decisions are [sic] linked with native bird richness in residential areas.” Collectively, individual yards that are designed and managed to enhance habitat characteristics, when occurring in the same neighborhood, may have a greater effect than a single, isolated yard.

Perhaps small, local efforts to restore habitat conditions are the best approach. This may be a difficult approach to sell to homeowners, particularly for existing suburban neighborhoods, as it may involve challenging certain established lifestyles and yard management practices. Nevertheless, promoting the benefits of habitat restoration by communicating them to neighbors both directly and through local garden clubs or other organizations may prove beneficial. We hope so.

Observed Yard Species List (arranged alphabetically)

Butterflies

Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*)

Cabbage White (*Pieris rapae*)

Clouded Sulfur (*Colias philodice*)

Eastern Tailed Blue (*Everes comyntas*)

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*)

Gray Hairstreak (*Strymon melinus humuli*)

Great Spangled Fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*)

Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)
Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*)
Painted Lady (*Vanessa cardui*)
Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta rubria*)
Silver-spotted Skipper (*Epargyreus clarus*)
Silvery Checkerspot (*Chlosyne nycteis nycteis*)
Spicebush Swallowtail (*Papilio troilus troilus*)
Zebra Swallowtail (*Eurytides marcellus*)

Moths

American Dagger Moth (*Acronicta americana*)
Carolina Sphinx Moth (*Manduca sexta*)
Cecropia Moth (*Hyalophora cecropia*)
Hummingbird Moth (*Hemaris thysbe*)
Milkweed Tussock Moth (*Euchaetes egle*)
Sphinx Moth (Sphingidae)
Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrhardia isabella*)

Bees and Wasps

Carpenter Bee (Anthophoridae)
Eastern Bumblebee (*Bombus impatiens*)
Giant Ichneumon Wasp (*Megarhyssa* sp.)
Honey Bee (*Apis mellifera*)
Leafcutting Bee (*Megachile* sp.)
Mason Bee (Megachilidae)
Paper Wasps (*Polistes* spp.)
Yellow Jacket (*Vespula* sp.)

Flies

Bee Fly (Bombyliidae)
Eastern Calligrapher (*Toxomerus geminatus*)
Virginia Giant (*Milesia virginiensis*)

Beetles and Bugs

Assassin Bug (Reduviidae)
Common Black Ground Beetle (*Pterostichus* sp.)
False Bombardier Beetle (*Galerita* sp.)
Firefly (Lampyridae)
Ladybug Beetle (Coccinellidae)
Leaf-footed Bug (*Acanthocephala* sp.)
Longhorn Beetle (Cerambycidae)
Pendunculate Ground Beetle (*Scarites subterraneus*)
Periodic Cicada (*Magicada* sp.)
Reddish-brown Stag Beetle (*Lucanus capreolus*)
Small Eastern Milkweed Bug (*Lygaeus kalmii*)

Spiders

Arrow-shaped Micrathena (*Micrathena sagittata*)
Black and Yellow Argiope (*Argiope aurantia*)
Black Widow (*Latrodectus mactans*)
Grass Spider (*Agelenopsis* sp.)
Long-jawed Orb Weaver (*Tetragnatha* sp.)
Marbled Orb Weaver (*Araneus marmoreus*)

Amphibians and Reptiles

Black Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*)
Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*)
Five-lined Skink (*Eumeces fasciatus*)
Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis sirtalis*)
Gray Tree Frog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*)
Ravine Salamander (*Plethodon richmondi*)

Mammals

Eastern Chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*)
Eastern Cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*)
Eastern Mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*)
Gray Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)
Opossum (*Didelphis marsupialis*)
Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)
Short-tailed Shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*)
White-footed Mouse (*Peromyscus* sp.)
White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Nesting Birds

American Robin (*Turdus migratorius*)
Carolina Chickadee (*Poecile carolinensis*)
Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)
Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*)
Eastern Towhee (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*)
House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*)
House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*)
Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)
Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*)
Tufted Titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

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American Ornithological Society Taxonomic Changes for 2021

Casey Rucker

The Committee on Classification and Nomenclature of the American Ornithological Society (AOS) published the sixty-second supplement to the AOS Check-list on June 29, 2021, and made the article publicly available immediately (Chesser et al. 2021). Among the notable changes extralimital to West Virginia was the split of Mew Gull, with the European subspecies now Common Gull (*Larus canus*) and the North American subspecies now Short-billed Gull (*Larus brachyrhynchus*).

As has recently been the case, no species was added to or deleted from the West Virginia bird list. Three species have been moved to different genera, and the taxonomic order of many families listed after Falconidae has been reshuffled once again.

Assignment to New Genera. The following species on the West Virginia list have been assigned to new genera.

Double-crested Cormorant was changed from *Phalacrocorax auritus* to *Nannopterum auritus*.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet was changed from *Regulus calendula* to *Corthylio calendula*, and moves before **Golden-crowned Kinglet** in taxonomic order.

Sedge Wren was changed from *Cistothorus platensis* to *Cistothorus stellaris*, because of a split with the **Grass Wren** of Latin America, which retains *Cistothorus platensis*.

Changes in taxonomic order. The order of families on the West Virginia list that are placed after Falconidae was changed as follows:

Tyrannidae (Flycatchers)

Vireonidae (Vireos)

Laniidae (Shrikes)

Corvidae (Corvids)

Paridae (Parids)

Alaudinae (Larks)

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

Regulidae (Kinglets)

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

Certhiidae (Treecreepers)

Poliotilidae (Gnatcatchers)

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

Mimidae (Mimids)

Sturnidae (Starlings)

Turdidae (Thrushes)

The following families retain their current order, after Turdidae.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

Motacillidae (Pipits)

Fringillidae (Finches)

Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)

Passerelidae (New World Sparrows)

Icteriidae (Chats)

Icteridae (Icterids)

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

Cardinalidae (Cardinalids)

Wil Hershberger, Secretary of the West Virginia Bird Records Committee, has revised our state list, which is available online at links located at the bottom of the page on <http://www.brooksbirdclub.org/west-virginia-bird-records-committee.html>.

In a separate development, the AOS has renamed its journals. Beginning January 1, 2021, *The Auk* henceforth will be known as *Ornithology*, and *The Condor* will be known as *Ornithological Applications*.

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R. T. Chesser, S. M. Billerman, K. J. Burns, C. Cicero, J. L. Dunn, B. E. Hernández-Baños, A. W. Kratter, I. J. Lovette, N. A. Mason, P. C. Rasmussen, J. V. Remsen, Jr., D. F. Stotz, and K. Winker. 2021. Sixty-second supplement to the American Ornithological Society's Check-list of North American birds. *Auk* 138, ukab037. <https://academic.oup.com/auk/advance-article/doi/10.1093/ornithology/ukab037/6309332>.

Book Review

Casey Rucker

Weidensaul, Scott. 2021. *A World on the Wing: The global odyssey of migratory birds*. W. Norton, New York, NY. 585 pp.

Brooks Bird Club members who attended Scott Weidensaul's presentation on Snowy Owls at a recent mid-winter meeting, and read Weidensaul's *Living on the Wind*, published in 1999, may wonder what prompted a new book on migration. The answer is, an astonishing number of developments that have dramatically increased our knowledge of migration, and birds' lives in general, over the last twenty years. In masterly fashion, Weidensaul weaves dozens of new developments in ornithology into tales of his global travels, from the coast of China to the Galapagos Islands to Denali National Park.

Our knowledge of bird migration used to be limited to recoveries of banded individuals and observations of birds in their wintering grounds. This century has already seen a revolution in technologies that help us understand the mysteries of birds' movements. Radar and mass-data technology have enabled scientists to accurately assess the numbers of birds traveling on a given night. Analysis of birds' feathers tells us the latitude where the bird underwent its molt, based on the stable isotopes of elements such as carbon, hydrogen, and strontium. Cornell's eBird has created a database of more than a billion records of observations through the year and, increasingly, around the world. And most importantly, the shrinking size of electronic transmitters has enabled us to track the movements of individual birds as small as warblers through geolocators, GPS tags, satellite transmitters, and other miniaturized tracking devices. For the first time, we can learn where birds actually go and how long they spend in each location. From all of these sources, our knowledge of bird migration has exploded.

Of course, in writing about these developments Weidensaul cannot help but rub our noses in all of the horrific problems humans are currently causing for birds. Weidensaul's travels bring him face to face with habitat destruction, intentional persecution, and myriad other woes of which most of us are already painfully aware. He works to offer hopefulness in many areas, but the book does not gloss over the realities of humans' threats to birds' continued existence.

Although migration is the theme of the book, overarching importance is given to the current focus of international bird conservation, seeking to understand and protect birds through their full annual cycle. Until recent decades most biological study focused on the breeding period of a bird's life to the exclusion of the rest of its year. The realization that focusing solely on two or three months out of twelve might not explain everything about a bird has finally taken hold. We now know a lot more about, say, the post-breeding use of early-successional areas by interior forest birds, and the importance of stopover locations to migrating birds who may only use the areas for a few days a year. We also know how important it is to solve the economic issues facing people who shoot, trap, and otherwise exploit birds in many countries. Only by understanding the bird's entire life can we hope to preserve its existence.

World on the Wing makes for tough reading in places, but the reader's way is eased by Weidensaul's storytelling ability and gift for explaining complex concepts simply. The book brings the general reader up to date on a wide range of developments in ornithology and conservation while taking us on a fascinating world tour. He even includes a pelagic trip off the Outer Banks with Brian Patteson. As a veteran of a couple of dozen of those voyages, I particularly enjoyed that bit of nostalgia.

eBird Notes
Winter
December 1, 2020–February 28, 2021

Michael Slaven

In the last issue of *The Redstart* I left readers with a question: would the irruptive explosion of Evening Grosbeaks that occurred in the autumn of 2020 continue? The answer was that it not only continued but intensified. The appearance of these blocky finches at home feeders provided welcome winter solace for those who were at home during the pandemic, and also offered good looks in the field to those lucky enough to encounter them. According to eBird data, there were 215 reported sightings of the species in the three months of this winter season. These reports stretched from December 1, 2020 to February 28, 2021 – the entire period covered by the Winter eBird Report. So, the birds were obviously present from mid-fall 2020 into spring 2021. What a treat! Other species that were present in many reports included Red-breasted Nuthatches in irruptive numbers, Purple Finches, and Red Crossbills.

Winter, is, for many of us, a time to find ducks, geese, gulls, and finches. This year the results were mixed. It was a good season generally for ducks, with 29 species reported. There were moderately strong numbers of expected species, but also there were multiple sightings of some less frequent winter visitors such as Black Scoter (*Melanitta americana*), White-winged Scoter (*Melanitta deglandi*), and Surf Scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*). These ducks were reported 63 times across the state from December 2 to February 28, usually being seen in larger rivers and lakes. It is slightly unusual to have the reports so evenly distributed over a three-month period.

Gulls were another story. This year, temperatures were too warm generally in the Great Lakes during December and January to produce the sort of freeze over that drives gulls seeking open water to West Virginia. As a result, sightings of gulls were noticeably below average, both in terms of numbers and species. Herring, Bonaparte's, and Ring-billed were the only reported species this winter, which was personally disappointing to me as a larophile (gull lover).

Other winter visitors included Tundra Swans (in modest numbers this year), Snow Geese, Ross's Geese, and Greater White-fronted Geese. Cackling Geese also made their appearance in the state too. The reports of Cackling Geese have been rising steadily in West Virginia, from a lone report in the 1990s, to 26 reports from 2000–2010. This past winter alone, there were nine reports to eBird. The increase could be attributed to several factors. There may indeed be more Cackling Geese in the state than there were thirty years ago, or there may be more birders to see them, or perhaps we are realizing as observers that the Cackling Goose is a bird we should look for among large flocks of Canada Geese.

I am happy to report that eBird also showed no lessening in the upsurge of new birders into the eBird community. Many new birders submitted lists and reports this past winter, which bodes well for the future of birding in the state. It was also encouraging to see reports beginning to come in from counties that have been overlooked by many birders. Better coverage of wide areas is an important component of data research for the scientists at Cornell, and an important factor in understanding avian populations.

As eBird becomes more and more robust in its data, and greater numbers of birders turn to it as their primary tool for keeping track of bird lists, there are some things that birders who wish to migrate their data from past observations to the eBird platform may want to know. One common question concerns the review process. If a sighting is flagged as rare or in very high numbers by filters built into the system it goes out to a reviewer (I am a reviewer in West Virginia). When this occurs, the reviewer can either make a decision on whether it should be included in the data set, ask the observer for more information, or exclude it from the data set for research. As reviewers, we do not decide whether you saw or heard the bird, and we do not change your lists. We only are there to decide whether it goes into the scientific data. Some common reasons that bird sightings are not approved for this data include overly long “distance traveled” lists (these have little scientific use when they get over approximately five miles), lists that stretch over one day and into another, lists that use the wrong protocol (for instance not using the nocturnal observation choice when recording nighttime flight calls) and often a simple lack of documentation. Sometimes we will see a photograph that clearly is misidentified. This has happened both with beginning and experienced birders. If a reviewer does not approve your sighting for inclusion into the database, it still remains on eBird in your personal lists.

I have been asked recently about entering life lists into eBird. It is a very handy place to track your sightings and can be very useful to birders who like to keep organized. If you have a long history of birding, but do not yet use eBird, it is well worth the effort. You can enter your life list as a single document or a series of documents. Instructions can be found at eBird’s Help Center, found at <https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000804866-enter-your-pre-ebird-life-list>. Make sure if you do not have dates to enter those species as having been observed on January 1, 1900. The eBird system is programmed to ignore that day in its data sets, and so it can be used to keep a life list. Simply mark it as “list building.” The scientists at eBird have their own taxonomic system, revised every August, and so while your list may look very slightly different from an American Birding Association list, your sightings are all preserved and can be searched by you to remember where, when, and how often you encountered any given species.

I hope to continue to see the rise in eBirders, and I look forward to seeing you in the field.

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Field Notes
Winter Season
December 1, 2020 – February 28, 2021

Casey Rucker

December and January were warmer than usual in the Mountain State, according to the Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University, while February was much colder than average. December and February were wetter than usual, while January was drier than average in precipitation.

These notes were gathered from (a) the West Virginia Birds Listserv, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, (b) Christmas Bird Count (CBC) results, and (c) field notes submitted to the editor by email and regular mail. The full content of the notes submitted 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>, and the results of the Christmas Bird Counts may be found at <http://netapp.audubon.org/CBCObservation/CurrentYear/ResultsByCount.aspx>.

The **Evening Grosbeak** invasion continued from the fall, with at least twelve counties reporting observations. Overall, bird diversity was similar to that of the winter before, with 143 species reported from 33 of West Virginia's 55 counties.

Geese, Swans, and Ducks – Sightings of **geese** were once again relatively sparse in West Virginia this winter. **Snow Geese** appeared in Jefferson (WS), Lewis (GR), Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP), Randolph (RB), and Wood (JB) Counties; **Ross's Geese** inspired reports from Mason (MG), Monongalia (CBC), Randolph (RB), and Wood (JB) Counties. **Greater White-fronted Geese** were reported in Mason (MG, WH, GR, JK) and Randolph (RB) Counties, and birders observed **Cackling Geese** in Mason County (GR, JK, MG, DP), Monongalia County (CBC), and Randolph County (RB). Reports of **Canada Geese** were as usual widespread throughout the state. On January 23, David Patick spotted the resident **Mute Swan** at McClintic Wildlife Management Area, Mason County. **Tundra Swans** were observed in Mason (MG, JK), Monongalia (HC, DCo, CBC, GR), Randolph (RB), and Upshur (LB) Counties.

Waterfowl numbers were up this winter, although rarities were few. The following species made appearances in at least ten West Virginia counties: **Wood Ducks, Gadwalls, Mallards, American Black Ducks, Canvasbacks, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Buffleheads, Hooded and Common mergansers, and Ruddy Ducks**; while birders in seven to nine counties found **American Wigeons, Green-winged Teal, Redheads, Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, and Red-breasted Mergansers**. The following birds inspired reports from the counties listed: **Northern Shovelers** in Kanawha (CBC), Mercer (JP), Monongalia (CBC), and Randolph (RB); **Northern Pintails** in Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (CBC), Mercer (JP), Randolph (RB), and Wood (JB); **Greater Scaup** in Fayette (SWi), Mercer (JP), Monongalia (HC, DCo), Randolph (RBo, RB), and Wood (JB); **Surf Scoters** in Berkeley (AT), Cabell (DP), and Wood (TB); **White-winged Scoters** in Monongalia (HC, DCo), Randolph (RBo, RB), Wetzel (WJ), and Wood (JB); and **Black Scoters** in Berkeley (AT) and Wood (JB). On December 2, Randy Bodkins found **Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Lesser and Greater scaup, two White-winged Scoters, and Buffleheads** in Elkins, Randolph County.

Turkeys, Grouse, and Pheasants – Wild Turkey sightings were widespread, including many on the tallies of Christmas Bird Counts. On February 27 Wilma Jarrell counted 21 **Wild Turkeys**, including five toms, on Fairview Ridge, Wetzel County. **Ruffed Grouse** reports came from Mercer (CBC), Pocahontas (CBC), and Randolph (RB) Counties. Richard Gregg found a pair of **Ring-necked Pheasants** at Marmet Lock and Dam, Kanawha County, on December 3.

Grebes – Pied-billed and Horned grebes were reported widely throughout the state.

Pigeons and Doves – Rock Pigeons and Mourning Doves continue to reside throughout the state, as reported primarily in Christmas Bird Counts.

Hummingbirds – A Rufous Hummingbird visited a heated feeder in Dorcas, Grant County, during December and January, as observed by Diane Holsinger, Mollie Brown, Rodney Bartgis, James Prutilpac, Steven Wilson, and Fred Atwood.

Rails and Coots – Virginia Rails were found in Christmas Bird Counts in Hardy, Jefferson, and Monongalia Counties. **American Coots** inspired reports only in Kanawha (CBC), Mason (GR, JK, MG, DP), and Raleigh (MW) Counties this winter.

Cranes – Mike Forman, Janet Keating, and Ted Boetner watched 24 **Sandhill Cranes** flying by the Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area boat ramp during the Ona Christmas Bird Count on December 21. David Patick and Gary Rankin saw a pair of **Sandhill Cranes** near Leon Ferry Lane, Mason County, on February 13.

Plovers – Reports of **Killdeer** were up this winter, with records from thirteen counties.

Sandpipers – American Woodcock made usual early appearances in Cabell (DP), Kanawha (HG), Randolph (RB), and Summers (JJP) Counties. **Wilson's Snipe** observations came from Hardy (CBC), Kanawha (RG), Mason (DP), Pendleton (CBC), Pocahontas (KB), and Summers (JJP) Counties.

Gulls – It was a sparse season for winter **gulls** in West Virginia once again. Birders reported **Bonaparte's Gulls** in Fayette (SWi, JTr), Mercer (JJP), Randolph (RB), Summers (JP), and Wetzel (WJ) Counties, and **Ring-billed Gulls** in eleven West Virginia counties. **Herring Gulls** appeared in reports from Fayette (SWi, JTr), Kanawha (RG), Mason (GR, JK, MG, DP), Putnam (JBT), and Wood (JB) Counties.

Loons – Hannah Clipp and Derek Courtney discovered a **Red-throated Loon** at Cheat Lake, Monongalia County, on December 5, and on January 1 Elliot Kirschbaum saw a **Common Loon** on Heather Lane in Jefferson County.

Cormorants – There were reports of **Double-crested Cormorants** from six counties this winter.

Hérons – Great Blue Herons appeared throughout the state this winter. **Great Egrets** were seen in Mason (DP) and Putnam (KK) Counties.

Vultures – Reports of **Black** and **Turkey vultures** came from fourteen and eighteen counties, respectively.

Eagles and Hawks – The Elkins Christmas Bird Count, Randolph County, included an **Osprey** on January 4. **Golden Eagles** inspired reports from Grant (RB), Hampshire (CBC), Hardy (FA), Mercer (JJP), Monroe (JP), Pendleton (CBC, RBo), Pocahontas (CBC), Randolph (RBo), and Summers (JJP) Counties. **Northern Harriers** as well as **Sharp-shinned** and **Cooper's hawks** appeared widely throughout West Virginia during the winter season. On December 14 Joette Borzik watched a **Cooper's Hawk** bathing in her backyard pond in Jefferson County. Rodney Bartgis found a **Northern Goshawk** during the Canaan Valley Christmas Bird Count in Tucker County on December 20.

Bald Eagles were reported from at least twenty counties this winter. **Red-shouldered** and **Red-tailed hawks** were observed in many parts of the state, while **Rough-legged Hawks** were once again scarce, inspiring reports only from Hampshire (CBC), Mason (MG), Randolph (RBo), Tucker (RBo, CBC), and Wood (JB) Counties.

Owls – Barn Owls were reported as usual in the Moorefield Christmas Bird Count in Hardy County on December 21. Reports of **Eastern Screech-Owls** and of **Great Horned Owls** came from eleven counties each. Birders in thirteen counties reported **Barred Owls**. **Short-eared Owls** appeared in Hardy County (CBC), Monongalia County (CBC), Randolph County (RB), Tucker County (CBC), and Wayne County (GR). The seven **Northern Saw-whet Owls** found during the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count, Monongalia County, on December 19, were the only ones reported this season.

Kingfishers – West Virginia birders in twenty counties reported **Belted Kingfishers**.

Woodpeckers – **Red-headed Woodpeckers** made appearances in eight counties, and **Red-bellied Woodpeckers**, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers**, **Downy** and **Hairy woodpeckers**, **Northern Flickers**, and **Pileated Woodpeckers** were all subjects of widespread reports in West Virginia over the winter.

Falcons – **American Kestrels** were well-represented in Christmas Bird Counts and other reports in most parts of the state. **Merlins** were observed in Christmas Bird Counts in Hardy, Jefferson, Kanawha, Mason, and Monongalia Counties. Reports of **Peregrine Falcons** came from Berkeley (AT), Fayette (CBC), Hardy (CBC), Kanawha (CBC), Mason (MG), Monongalia (CBC), and Wood (JB) Counties.

Flycatchers – Reports of **Eastern Phoebe** came from fifteen counties this winter.

Vireos – For the fourth year in a row a **White-eyed Vireo** appeared during the Morgantown Christmas Bird Count, on December 19 in Monongalia County.

Jays, Crows, and Ravens – **Blue Jays**, **American Crows**, and **Common Ravens** appeared in their usual haunts throughout the state. **Fish Crows** appeared in Berkeley (AT, MO), Jefferson (JBz), and Pendleton (CBC) Counties.

Chickadees and **Titmice** – **Carolina** and **Black-capped chickadees** appeared in reports from their overlapping territories throughout West Virginia. **Tufted Titmice** occupied their usual spots in reports from throughout the state.

Larks – Reports of **Horned Larks** came from Berkeley County (CBC), Grant County (RB), Hardy County (CBC), Jefferson County (CBC), Mason County (DP, JBT), Monongalia County (CBC), Pendleton County (CBC), and Randolph County (RB).

Swallows – James Phillips spotted the first **Tree Swallows** of 2021 on February 27 at Hinton, Summers County.

Kinglets – **Ruby-crowned** and **Golden-crowned kinglets** were both familiar sights in most parts of the state this winter.

Waxwings – **Cedar Waxwing** sightings were down this winter, coming only from nine counties.

Nuthatches – It was an irruption year for **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, which inspired reports in sixteen counties. **White-breasted Nuthatches** were as usual widely reported throughout the state.

Creepers – Birders in seventeen West Virginia counties reported **Brown Creepers**. Bruni Haydl hosted three **Brown Creepers** at her suet feeder in Charles Town, Jefferson County, on January 27.

Wrens – The Raleigh County Christmas Bird Count recorded a **House Wren** on December 20. West Virginia birders reported **Winter** and **Carolina wrens** in good numbers statewide.

Catbirds, Thrashers, and Mockingbirds – **Gray Catbirds** were recorded in Christmas Bird Counts in Jefferson and Monongalia Counties. **Brown Thrashers** were spotted in Christmas Bird Counts in Fayette, Jefferson, McDowell, Ohio, and Pocahontas Counties. West Virginians reported **Northern Mockingbirds** widely in lower elevations over the winter season.

Starlings – **European Starlings** continued their widespread occupation of habitats throughout our state.

Thrushes – **Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes, and American Robins** appeared in good numbers in our state this winter, mostly at lower elevations. On December 14, Derek Courtney found a **Wood Thrush** in Morgantown, Monongalia County.

Old World Sparrows – Thanks to Christmas Bird Counts, we have been assured that the **House Sparrow** continues throughout the state, primarily in urban and farm settings.

Pipits – Terry Bronson counted 250 **American Pipits** near Robert C. Byrd Locks and Dam, Mason County, on December 7. Other reports of **American Pipits** were up this season, from Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (CBC), Mason (CBC), Monongalia (CBC), Pendleton (CBC), Randolph (RB), and Wood (TB) Counties.

Finches and Allies – It was a very good season for winter finches. **Evening Grosbeaks, House and Purple finches, Pine Siskins, and American Goldfinches** appeared widely in West Virginia this winter. On December 14, Cynthia Burkhart hosted 50 **Evening Grosbeaks** and 50 **American Goldfinches** at her feeders in Ritchie County. **Common Redpolls** were spotted in Hardy County (MJ), Monongalia County (CBC), Tucker County (EG), and Wood County (JB). **Red Crossbills** were observed in Grant County (RB), Pendleton County (CBC), Pocahontas County (CBC), and Wayne County (DP).

Longspurs and Buntings: On February 3, Michael Griffith discovered 40 **Lapland Longspurs** on Leon Ferry Lane, Mason County, and later that day the birds were also seen by Janet Keating and Josh Holland. Later in the month, on February 20, Michael Griffith saw 35 **Lapland Longspurs** and one **Snow Bunting** at McCausland Wildlife Management Area, Mason County. Mimi Kibler spotted three **Snow Buntings** in Parsons, Tucker County, on December 8.

Sparrows, Juncos, and Towhees – **Chipping, Field, Fox, American Tree, White-crowned, White-throated, Song, and Swamp sparrows**, as well as **Dark-eyed Juncos** and **Eastern Towhees**, appeared widely. **Savannah Sparrows** were observed in Hardy (CBC), Jefferson (CBC), Mason (MG, JK, GR, DP), Monongalia (CBC), and Pendleton (CBC) Counties. A **Lincoln's Sparrow** was a new bird for the Canaan Valley Christmas Bird Count in Tucker County on December 20.

Blackbirds and Allies – Reports of **Eastern Meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Rusty Blackbirds, and Common Grackles** came from areas all over the state.

Warblers – Laura Ceperley found a very late **Common Yellowthroat** at Marmet Lock and Dam, Kanawha County, on December 6. **Palm Warblers** were observed in Mason County (GR, JK, MG, DP) and Ohio County (CBC). Birders in lower elevations saw Myrtle-race **Yellow-rumped Warblers** at locations throughout the state.

Cardinals – Birders throughout the state reported **Northern Cardinals** in good numbers. The Inwood Christmas Bird Count, Berkeley County, included a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** on January 2.

Contributors to the Winter Field Notes: Frederick Atwood (FA), Catherine Bailey (KB), Rodney Bartgis (RB), Jon Benedetti (JB), Randy Bodkins (RBo), Joette Borzik (JBz), Luanne Bowers (LB), Terry Bronson (TB), Hannah Clipp (HC), Derek Courtney (DCo), Elaine George (EG), Hulett Good (HG), Richard Gregg (RG), Michael Griffith (MG), Wil Hershberger (WH), Wilma Jarrell (WJ), Mark Johnson (MJ), Kim Kazmierski (KK), Janet Keating (JK), Matthew Orsie (MO), David Patick (DP), James Phillips (JP), James and Judy Phillips (JJP), Gary Rankin (GR), N. Wade Snyder (WS), Jim Triplett (JTr), Jim and Beverly Triplett (JBT), Alex Tsiatsos (AT), Mindy Waldron (MW), and Steven Wilson (SWi).

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Date	Activity	Place
February	Write an article for <i>The Redstart</i> and <i>Mail Bag</i>	
May 6-9	Wildflower Pilgrimage	Canaan Valley, WV
May 8	Migratory Bird Day	
Dec. 14–Jan. 5, 2022	Christmas Bird Count.....	Statewide

*Due to the uncertainties of COVID-19 in 2021,
please visit the BBC website calendar for updates throughout the year.*

BBC FORAYS

2021 Camp Kidd 4-H Camp, Tucker County, WV Cancelled due to COVID-19
2022 Camp Galilee, Terra Alta, Preston County

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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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