



"Hear! hear!" screamed the jay from a neighboring tree, where I had heard a tittering for some time, 'winter has a concentrated and nutty kernel, if you know where to look for it.'"

~ Henry David Thoreau

December Meeting

Date: Monday, December 14th, 7:00 PM
Place: AMC Lifetime Building/Blue Ridge Community College Education Center

Program: Holiday Party!

It is that time of year again. Time for our annual holiday gathering! Please bring your favorite holiday goodie to share such as cookies, cheeses, nuts, fruit, dips etc. As always, the club will be providing the punch. We always enjoy sampling everyone's festive treats and the opportunity to visit with our friends and fellow birders. See you there!



Field Trips

Hello fellow birders. We are now approaching the Holiday season, and with it comes colder weather. No local field trips are planned for the month of December. If anyone out there has an ideal or a special place they want to share please contact Jo King kingbird10@yahoo.com or Allen Lerner larnersky@mindspring.com. Please consider participating in a Christmas Bird Count if you can!

TROPICAL BIRDING

February 10-18, 2009: Costa Rica Birding Trip
 Coordinator: Diane Holsinger
dhworkout@yahoo.com or 540-896-7132

Come see the beautiful birds of Costa Rica on this week-long field trip. To lodges like Punta Leona on the beach and Carara National Park for owling in the evening. We will also take a boat ride on the Rio Tarcoles with Mangrove Birding Tours.

Then it's on to Rincon Bridge for special birds like the Blue-tailed Goldenthrout and the Yellow-billed Cotinga. We will then travel to San Vito and stay two nights at the Las Cruces Field Station near the Wilson Botanical Gardens

If you have never been to the tropics or Costa Rica, you won't be disappointed. If you are worried about finding or identifying birds, a bird guide will be with us throughout our trip.

Call or email Diane for price & more information.



WINGBEATS

Holiday Giving

Now is the time for thoughtful gift giving for the upcoming holidays. Following are some of my personal favorites as they relate to "birding." These gifts can be for others or perhaps even for yourself.

- Take someone birding - this provides you the opportunity to share your knowledge with others, who, as time goes on, could also share.
- Recruit a new member to our bird club - no need to explain the benefits of this.
- Buy some left-over bird seed from our seed sale - see or phone Grant Simmons: 540-337-0471.
- One of my favorites, and a MUST HAVE, is what is called a "Slide & Flex Bino-system"-about \$20. It takes the weight of the binos off your neck and distributes it to your shoulders, which is very comfortable for those who spend continuous time using binoculars.
- Join and participate in other organizations - such as VSO (Virginia Society of Ornithology), www.virginiabirds.net
- This is the parent organization of our club. ABA (American Birding Association), www.aba.org. Great articles, photos and information for trips anywhere in the world is provided by ABA. CVWO (Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory), www.cvwo.org
It offers spring and fall bird banding as well as many educational programs. One of the programs is the Kiptopeke Challenge - in which John Spahr, Allen Lerner, Nancy and Ed Lawler have participated.
- Closer to home - give some thought to joining the Rockingham Bird Club and/or the Monticello Bird Club.
- Give yourself or another person a book related to birding or any of the many optics available - the management of sales for the ABA has changed hands and is now managed by two entities. One is: Buteo Books (of Nelson County), www.buteobooks.com or 1-800-722-2460; specializing in ornithology books and media for 40 years. The other entity is Eagle Optics, www.eagleoptics.com or 1-800-289-1132; featuring, of course, all makes and models of binos, scopes, tripods and related accessories.

These are just a few ideas of many you could consider for the upcoming holidays AND support the birding community as well.

-Walt Childs, President

Chincoteague Report



A small group made it up to Chincoteague. It was slim pickn's on the islands with only Northern Gannet, a handful of Surf Scoters and flybys from a Red-throated Loon and Laughing Gulls. No other ducks! No Purple Sandpiper were seen either.

The highlight was a very obliging Snow Bunting (above) that was still hanging out around the pier's picnic area at Kiptopeake State Park.

Unfortunately most of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge was closed due to severe damage from the previous week's nor'easter.

-Brenda Tekin

Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory Cuba Bird Survey March 18 -29, 2010

CVWO is endorsing its second U.S. led and managed birding program to Cuba. Only a few vacancies remain for this exclusive trip coordinated by the Caribbean Conservation Trust (CCT), based in Connecticut. CCT, under license from the U.S. Treasury Department, has a 15-year history of managing bird surveys in Cuba. The trip will be co- led by John Spahr of CVWO and Dr. William Suarez, a bilingual Cuban ornithologist from the Cuban Museum of Natural History. Cuba hosts nearly 30 endemic species, including the world's smallest bird, as well as many of the same neotropical migrants that visit us in the warmer

months, including over 30 warblers. It is a fascinating country to visit. For more information and a detailed itinerary contact John Spahr, jspahr@yahoo.com or 540-887-2345.

110th Christmas Bird Count

This year the Augusta CBC will be held on Dec. 19th 2009 . Also this year Allen Lerner is the new Compiler for the Augusta Count . He will be at the Dec. meeting so that anyone interested in the count can pick an area or you can contact him at larnersky@mindspring.com or contact by cell phone --- 540 -- 280 -- 3423 . The tally pot luck dinner will be hosted by John & Nancy Spahr at 234 Fredrick St. Staunton . The dinner will start at 6 pm . For more info contact Allen Lerner .

BIG YEAR 2010 for Bob Ake & John Spahr

On January 1, 2010 Norfolk resident and birder extraordinaire, Bob Ake, and I will begin our "ABA Big Year." This will be an attempt to count as many bird species as possible within one calendar year, for us 2010. The ABA part refers to the American Birding Association geographic area, defined as the 49 states in the continental US, including Alaska, as well as Canada. Oceanic trips within 200 miles of the coast are included, except for the Bahamas and Antilles.

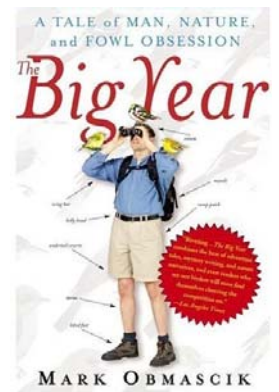
Within these geographic confines a total of 957 species have been recorded. Of this astounding number, 484 are recorded as "common" birds. We hope to find nearly all of these common birds. Another 178 are listed as "uncommon" due to limited ranges -- for example, Aleutian Tern (Alaska), or Buff-breasted Flycatcher (southeast Arizona). Most of these are possible if we target trips to the right places at the right time of the year. Then there are 80 "rare" species that are either non-breeding visitors from Europe, Asia or Central America, or are very local breeders, such as Hook-billed Kite (southern tip of Texas), White Wagtail (western Alaska), or Brambling (sporadic northern US and Canada). With the right strategy and a little luck we hope to see some of these. Another 100 species are considered "casual," that is reported less than annually, such as Streak-backed Oriole (sporadic SW US). We'll be thrilled to luck into one or two in

this category. Then there are another 107 birds that have been reported less than 3 times in 30 years, so called "accidentals" like the Cuban Martin or Eurasian Siskin. Finding one of these would be the equivalent of a lottery win.

The current record for an ABA Big Year is 745 species. We do not expect to challenge this number, or even come close. We would like to tally at least 650 species and hopefully approach 700. Whether we get 700, 650, or even only 600 species matters little to me. My ABA list currently stands at a meager 534, so any number above that would be a success for me.

I've been intrigued with this idea ever since reading *The Big Year: A Tale of Man, Nature, and a Fowl Obsession*, by Mark Obmascik. This book chronicles a race by three men attempting to break the ABA Big Year record in 1998. After reading this tale, I made a mental note to attempt such a feat after I retire.

Little did I know that it would come the very first year of my retired life, thanks in large part to Bob Ake. Back in December 2008 I contacted Bob to invite him on a group birding trip to Cuba. Bob initially declined because he was hoping to do a Big Year in 2009 by himself. I suggested that he postpone the Big Year to 2010 so that I could tag along and come to Cuba in March 2009. To my surprise and delight, he agreed. We had a great trip to Cuba, and now, after months of planning (mostly by Bob), we're on the threshold of starting our year's big adventure.



This adventure will entail two trips each to Arizona, Texas, California and Alaska, as well as at least one trip to Florida, Colorado, Minnesota and New England. Shorter trips to adjacent states will happen as well, especially if there is an unusual bird nearby that we can easily "chase." The year will also include multiple pelagic trips off both the east and west coast.

Fortunately for me, Bob has been to almost all of the birding "hot spots" that we will visit in this quest. He knows where to go and when. He has much of the calendar year scheduled, putting us at the best locations during the ideal time to optimize our effort. This includes places like Duluth, Minnesota in early February for northern owls. Also, South Florida -- including the Dry Tortugas -- in April. Then there is

Nome, Gamble and the Pribilofs in Alaska in early July for breeding murrelets, auklets and kittiwakes, plus limited breeders like Bluethroat, Northern Wheatear and Arctic Warbler. Our first big trip is to Texas in mid January where we hope to score lots of common birds along with specialties like Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Muscovy Duck, Plain Chachalaca, Least Grebe, Whooping Crane, Red-crowned Parrot, Long-billed Thrasher, and Altamira Oriole, perhaps lucking into a Clay-colored Thrush en route.



Of course we will begin our quest right here in Virginia, starting at the coast and including at least one CBC. Then it's off to Texas. Between most trips we will be returning to our respective homes, and loving wives who have given us their encouragement and blessing. In fact, Joyce and Nancy will be joining us on several of these ventures.

I hope to write a short update of our travels and bird totals and send it to the editor of this newsletter each month. Anyone who wants a near real-time chronicle, check out Bob's blog <http://bobsbirds.blogspot.com/> next year. Bob hopes to write a few sentences each day listing the highlights, or "lowlights," of our adventure. Bob also intends to post a few photos each day on his Flickr site <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bobsbirds/>.

John Spahr
Staunton, VA

ABC Meeting Minutes

November minutes:

Meeting convened at 7:05 pm on Monday Nov. 9th. Ed Lawler counted 60 people attending, a fabulous

turnout indeed! There were 4 guests and one new member present.

- Walt Childs reported a dramatic account of a squirrel falling prey to a Red-tailed Hawk at his feeder.
- Grant Simmons reported a successful seed sale, thanks to help from students at Mary Baldwin as well as members who helped with sorting, stacking, loading, delivering etc. We sold almost 15,000 lbs of seed, filled 103 orders and raised over \$2,800. We still have peanut halves and 10 lb Nijer bags, also more can be ordered.

Field Trips:

- Alan Lerner was at Chincoteague the previous weekend. He saw a Purple Sandpiper on island #1 in the bay, Gannets, Snow Geese and Ross' Geese, and expected these to increase considerably in number by the upcoming trip on Nov. 21st.
- Brenda Tekin will be visiting islands 2, 3 and 4 on the upcoming trip.
- Diane Holsinger still has opening for the trip to Costa Rica in Feb. 2010.

For all those who would like to participate in the annual Christmas Bird Count, Crista Cabe will be conducting the Waynesboro count on Jan. 2nd, and John Spahr will be organizing the Augusta County count on Dec. 19th. Please get in touch with them.

- Walt described the experience of participating with the Rockingham Bird Club in the of banding Saw Whet Owls. It was an amazing evening, beginning with the hike to the wooded knoll where the operation was set up. Anyone interested in helping with this is invited to contact him for further details.

- Bob Ake gave a short but very informative talk about VARCOM, the Virginia Avian Records COMMITTEE. We all learned how important this group is in substantiating bird sightings in the state, and were shown a sample of the submission form.

We concluded the evening with one of John Spahr's wonderfully entertaining slide shows. This time we were treated to the highlights of two previous trips to Cuba in Nov. of '08 and March of '09, and another trip is planned for March 2010.

There is a huge variety of bird life there, from the tiny Bee Hummingbird that is barely 2" long, to others that are surprisingly large and showy, Cuba is home to some 370 species,



70% being migratory and about 25-30 endemics. John's group visited with the author of the field guide they were using, and were able to examine taxidermy specimens of all the native endemic birds.

We also were able to see many examples of local architecture, hundreds of migrating red crabs, and had a rousing "Old Car ID "session, as there are many classic cars still on the road and going places in Cuba.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessie Shaw, Secretary

Treasurer's Report
submitted by Catherine Kohus

9/30/2009 – 10/15/2009

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE - 9/30/2009	\$ 4,373.14	
INCOME	\$ 15.00	
EXPENSES	\$ 7.65	
BALANCE - 10/15/2009		\$ 4,380.49
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE - 9/30/2009	\$ 4,348.82	
INCOME	\$ 9,186.84	
EXPENSES	\$ 5,977.75	
BALANCE - 10/15/2009		\$ 7,557.91
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 10/15/2009		\$ 11,938.40

Bird Quiz!

Can you identify the bird below?



The answer will be revealed in next month's newsletter. Happy guessing!

Last Month: Yellow-crowned Night Heron (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

Send change of address to:

Paul Callo
467 Chinquapin Dr.,
Lyndhurst, VA 22952
Email: pcallo@mbc.edu

Virginia Society of Ornithology Website

virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club Website

www.augustabirdclub.org



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM
JANUARY 2010 – DECEMBER 2010

Regular

Individual \$15 _____
Couple \$25 _____ (2 people at the same address)
Family \$30 _____ (3 or more people at the same address)

Contributing*

Individual \$25 _____
Couple \$35 _____ (2 people at the same address)
Family \$40 _____ (3 or more people at the same address)

Sustaining*

Individual \$50 _____
Couple \$60 _____ (2 people at the same address)
Family \$75 _____ (3 or more people at the same address)

* Any amount contributed over regular dues is *tax deductible* as a charitable contribution to the extent allowed by law. The Augusta Bird Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Date _____

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Prefer to receive Bulletin by: USPS MAIL _____ E-MAIL _____

Please return this form with a check payable to Augusta Bird Club, by **January 31st 2010.**

Mail to: Augusta Bird Club
2290 Old Greenville Rd
Staunton VA 24401

Thank you for your continuing support!