



AUGUSTA
BIRD
C L U B

"We hear the beating of wings over Bethlehem and a light that is not of the sun or of the stars shines in the midnight sky."

~ Maud van Buren

December Meeting

Date: Monday, December 12th, 6:30 PM
Place: AMC Lifetime Building/Blue Ridge
 Community College Education Center

Program: Holiday Dinner!



It is time for our potluck holiday dinner with our bird club friends. On Monday, December 12th at 6:30 (note ½ hour earlier time) we will gather for a meal followed by a short

program (Paul can you get the details of the program from Penny please to add here). Please bring your favorite side dishes, breads and desserts. The Bird Club will provide the meat and beverages. And there will be door prizes! So come join us for a night of fellowship and good food. If you have any questions, feel free to call Linda Matkins at 363-8229. Al Bourgeois, a wildlife biologist with the Virginia Dept. of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF) with areas of responsibility including Augusta, Bath, Highland, Alleghany and Rockbridge Counties as well as DGIF's Wildlife Management Areas (WMA's) such as Little North Mtn WMA, Goshen WMA, Highland WMA and Gathright WMA will give a brief presentation on the new

Access Permit which will go into effect in January 2012. This permit will be required for anyone who uses our WMA's unless they have a hunting or fishing license.

In addition, Bill Corwin will provide a delightful, photographic travelogue of Africa as a visual background during our pot luck dinner. Bill can answer any questions we may have as to who, what, when, where, and what bird we are viewing. Don't miss this delightful array of photos!!



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Field Trips

Sunday, December 18th: Christmas Bird Count
Meeting Place & Time: Staunton Big Lots parking lot, 8:00 AM

Coordinator: Allen Lerner

larnersky@mindspring.com or 540-280-3423

Contact Allen for an area to cover for this annual event. The "Tally Dinner" (pot luck/BYO) for all of those participating in the Christmas Bird Count will be held at Penny Warren's home, 215 Kalorama Street, Staunton, on Sunday, December 18th at 6:30 p.m. Penny's home is right around the corner from Shakespeare Theater and the Stonewall Jackson Hotel. If you need further directions please contact Penny. Allen will provide a meat course and Penny will provide a seafood and rice dish. Please RSVP to Penny (penny@Staunton.com or 540-849-9245) by December 15th with how many will attend and what you will bring.



Monday, January 2nd: Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count

Coordinator: Crista Cabe ccabe@mbc.edu or 540-234-9155

Tally dinner: to be announced

The President's Perch

"One hundred and twelve years and still counting"

As most of you know, Frank Chapman, an officer in the early stages of the formation of the Audubon Society, suggested changing the Christmas 'Side Hunt' (a competition of who could shoot the most game) to a 'Christmas Bird Census' that would count birds versus shoot birds. Thus began

the annual Christmas Bird Count. Twenty seven birders in 25 different areas tallied 90 species on December 25th, 1900.

According to the Audubon website as of 2008, there were 2,113 CBC circles and approximately 60,000 participants. Their website states *"Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action."*

As Allen noted at our November meeting, even if you cannot go out to participate for the day or part of the day, **please consider watching your feeders for an hour or so and reporting that data.** This, too, is an important piece to the CBC. Please contact Allen if you can cover an area on Sunday, December 18th and contact Crista for the Waynesboro count to be held on January 2nd.

On a local level, Crista has provided the following historical information:

"The Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count was first conducted by nine participants on December 16, 1972 and reported 53 species observed on count day. It has been conducted every year since then. It was established by Ruth Snyder, a charter member of the Augusta Bird Club. She was the organizer/compiler for many years. Whether or not the ABC officially sponsored the count in those early years I can't say, but it has always been closely associated with our club. As a teenager, I participated in this count with my dad. I have been compiler since 1992-1993, so this will be my 19th year."



Anyone can look at the historical data at http://audubon2.org/cbchist/count_table.html. The code for the Waynesboro Count is VAWY. It's kind of fun to sift through the numbers from previous years.

A few tidbits:

Canada Goose - first reported in 1976, we got only a few for the first several years (didn't break 20 until 1983); since the early 2000s, we have reported anywhere from 556 in 2005-06 to 1996 in 2007-08 (the latter was a high count).

Ring-necked pheasant appeared 3 times in the 1970s, and never since.

Northern Bobwhite populations have plumeted. High count was 55 in 1976; last reported on this count in 1997.

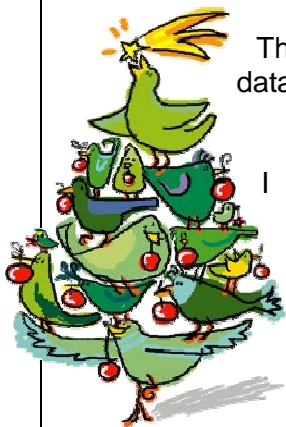
Loggerhead shrikes were sparse but reported just about every year until 1991 but have been reported only 3 years since then.

Eastern Bluebird numbers have gone in the opposite direction - from 3 and 4 in 1972 and 1973 respectively, to a high count of 313 in 2008-09.

Absent from the count until 1998-99 were Eastern Towhees, but we have found them every year since then; have they expanded their wintering range or are we getting better at finding them?

Evening Grosbeaks were common in the 1970s, occasional in the 1980s, and rare in the years since. High count was 330 in 1977-78 - a VERY cold winter when the South River in Waynesboro froze solid, bank to bank, 2-3 feet thick at least. (I remember that very clearly!)

High count for any species in a single year was 1979-80 (December 15, 1979): 300,000 Common Grackles. Reported that same year were 7,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, 1,400 Brown-headed cowbirds, 4,509 House Sparrows, and 11,000 European Starlings. Whew! Just figuring out how to count all those birds in huge flocks was the stuff of legend in our club for many years."



Thanks Crista for all of the interesting data!

I will look forward to all of the numbers and species included in this year's CBC and I thank all of you in advance for your willingness to participate!!!

-Penny Warren, President

Thanks for Buying Bird Seed!

I want to thank our members who bought bird seed from the club even though the prices for Sunflower seeds were considerably higher than previ-

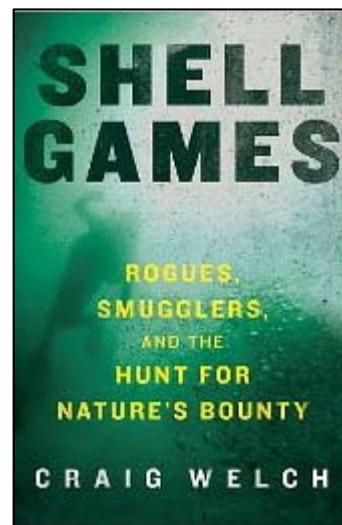
ously. We did have a good response and our net profit is over \$2800 which compares to last year when our profit was \$2794.49. This year we sold less poundage, 10,540 pounds of seed compared to 13,365 last year. The year 1994 was the peak of seeds sold when we processed 39,308 pounds of seed but that was before all the feed stores got in on selling bird seed.

I do want to give special thanks to Crista Cabe who set up the on line shop with Google, prepared the Order Sheet, tabulated the orders and with her husband Gary and daughter Emily checked off and loaded the orders on pick-up day. My thanks to Linda Matkins who arranged for the delivery space and provided eats and a husband for pick up day. Thanks also to the others who assisted with seed distribution on that windy day. Catherine Kohus deserves thanks for keeping track of the money and tabulating the profit. The result of the efforts of these individuals and your purchases along with the many non-members means that we have the resources to send several youth to Nature Camp.

We did order some extra seed and have sold most of it but we still have 2 20lb. bags of Niger seed (\$24), and 1 5lb. (\$7.50) Peanut splits along with 1 Mini Squirrel Buster Feeder (\$18). If you can use any of these items please call me at 337-0471 or 448-5393 and I will bring them to the December meeting.

Grant Simmons

The Naturalist's Book Nook

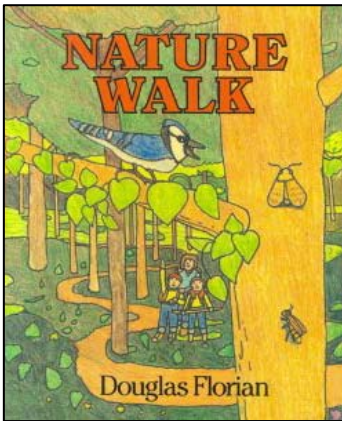


"Shell Games A True Story of Cops, Con Men and the Smuggling of America's Strangest Wildlife" by journalist Craig Welch was a recent read of mine. This crime-caper book takes you into the underworld of the illegal sale of wildlife within the U.S. There are undercover informants, double crossing crooks, outlaw scuba divers, hit men ... yes, hit men..... and then the good guys, the Wildlife Agents on the hunt of the smugglers. It was an eye opener for me into the smuggling realm and gave me a new level of appreciation of what Wildlife Agents have to do. A

great deal of the book focuses on the geoduck (pronounced gooey duck), the world's largest burrowing clam and those who poach it illegally, those who buy it illegally and *all* of the money that is made. So jump on the "Clamdestine" boat and go for a ride into the underworld of smuggling of a whole lot of this unusual shellfish...and more!!

Books for Children

I am a big fan of children's literature and a series of books that my boys and I enjoyed when they were younger are by Douglas Florian. All of his books are unique and whimsical with extremely clever word play and accompanied by his visually enticing artwork that is as unique as his poems. In



his artist's statement he says *'My drawings are abstract regressionist. They are old but behave like little children.'* That statement alone may give you an insight into his very unique wit and humor that comes across in his poems and drawings. He has one book that may be of particular interest to

the club and it is entitled "on the wing" with the focus being on birds. One of my favorites is a poem from the perspective of being a Hawk and the drawing has the Hawk wearing a pair of binoculars!! If you have a young person on your Christmas list, please check out Florian's books.

A very recent release is "The Conference of the Birds" by Peter Sis. Sis is an award winning author and illustrator of children's books but this particular book will be appealing to adults as well. It is based on the ancient Persian epic poem of the same name and the book has already received many accolades. Although the book is more about personal journeys versus birds, the artwork is stunning and could be a welcome addition to most homes.

Joyful reading!

- Penny Warren

The Wide, Wild & Weird World of Birds and Birding

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at University of Virginia is offering the following course that might interest members.

Course # A66: *The Wide, Wild & Weird World of Birds and Birding*

Time: 10 AM - Noon

Dates: Feb 9, 16, 23; Mar 1,8

Location: R.R. Smith Center

20 S. New Street, Staunton, VA

Instructor: John Spahr

See <http://pages.shanti.virginia.edu/olliuva/> for online catalog and course registration.



Ideas for Speaker Topics

The Augusta County Bird Club has a membership with highly diverse interests in birds and nature in general. As the person arranging programming, I would like input on what would be topics of interest to you. This will help me in a couple of ways: If there are numerous members who want the same sort of presentations, I'll work hard on getting speakers addressing that topic; and there may be topics or speakers out there that I simply haven't thought of. I'll welcome any and all ideas at ne-belpk@yahoo.com. Thanks for any help you can provide.

-Peter Nebel

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

November 14, 2011

The November meeting was called to order by President Penny Warren by asking if guests were present. We did have a guest from Rockbridge County. She then asked how many saw the movie "The Big Year" a movie about identifying as many birds as possible in one year. Several persons saw the movie and enjoyed it.

President Warren then stated we need persons to serve as Education Chairman and Membership Chair. Anyone interested should contact her.

Grant announced that we have some extra seeds available from the Seed Sale. Allen Lerner reported on a Birding trip to Chincoteague that he is leading beginning Friday the 17th. Those going should see thousands of Snow Geese and perhaps a Ross's Goose. There has been a report of a Eurasian Widgeon in the refuge. He is planning to leave at 5:00 am Friday.

Allen also reported that the Augusta County Christmas Bird Count will be held December 18th with the reporting dinner at Penny Warren's at 6:30. Penny announced the dinner will be pot luck. It was stated that the Waynesboro count would be held on January 2nd headed by Crista Cabe.

Dan reported that he would be attending the Saw Whet Owl banding west of Broadway the following Monday night and would be glad to take others.

Linda Matkins announced that our next meeting would be a dinner meeting held on December 12th. She asked that members bring a dish to share with meat being furnished.

Penny shared that her sister had seen a yellow Cardinal in Kentucky.

Peter Nebel introduced the speaker for the evening, Ken Klotz from UVA, who shared pictures and information regarding a birding trip to the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The trip took him and his wife to an island only 10 degrees from the North Pole that is 60% covered by ice and is totally dark from November to January.

The program closed with Ken answering questions about his unique trip.

- Grant Simmons, Secretary

Virginia Society of Ornithology Website

virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club Website

www.augustabirdclub.org

Bird Quiz!

Can you identify the bird below?



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

Last Month: Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*)

REMINDER!

Membership renewals are due Jan. 1st

Watch for your renewal form to arrive by mail soon!

**Your membership fees and donations
Allowed the bird club to help the following
Conservation and Education Organizations
in 2011**

Nature Camp
Virginia Society of Ornithology
Valley Conservation Council
The Wildlife Center of Virginia
The Nature Conservancy
Hawk Migration Assoc. of No. America
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Virginia Bluebird Society
American Bird Conservancy
Costal Virginia Wildlife Observatory
VA Nongame & Endangered Wildlife Program
Important Bird Areas Program
Audubon Society (Christmas Bird Count)
