



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 47, No.4
December 2012

*"Tis the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall,
the genial fire of charity in the heart."*

~ Washington Irving

DECEMBER MEETING

Date: Monday, December 10th, 6:30 PM
NOTE TIME CHANGE

Place: Covenant Presbyterian Church
2001 North Coalter St., Staunton

Program: Holiday Party!

It's time for our annual holiday dinner. Please bring your favorite vegetable, salad, bread, side dish or dessert. The club will provide the meat and beverages. During the meal we will be entertained with a slide presentation composed by John Spahr using his knowledge, information and unique sense of humor about birds and the bird world. There will door prizes too! Come celebrate the season with good food and fellowship.



THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

The Christmas Bird Count

It is that time of year again when many of us participate in one or more of the Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts. Given some of the unusual sightings and/or high numbers of certain species that have been occurring during the past month or so, e.g., Evening Grosbeaks, Rufous Hummingbirds, Pine Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatches and of most recent with the Nelson's Sparrow in Rockingham and the Snow Bunting in Rockbridge County, maybe this year will provide some interesting sightings and numbers of birds.

The Augusta County CBC, as most know, began in 1964 with three observers in one party recording 29 species for the day, logging in nine hours and 80 miles by car and foot. Last year, we had 28 counters logging in 55.5 hours, 417.50 miles and 79 species!

YuLee gave me her hand written records for the CBC and I thought I would pull out just a few highlights that caught my eye. In 1966, 25 Bobwhites were recorded and with a peak number of 113 recorded in 1976. Between 1994 to present, only single sightings were noted in 1997 and 2004. Barn Owls, never in numbers over 4 but there were no sightings from 1992-2006. One Snowy Owl was recorded in 1982. Red-breasted Nuthatches, 17 being the peak in 1980 and 13 noted in 1993 and 1995. Evening Grosbeaks, 255 in 1997 and the



last group of 9 recorded in 1995. Pine Siskins most recent good showing was in 2008 with 30, a Snow Bunting in 77 and one in 90 and one American Woodcock was recorded in 1993 and in 1996.

In the past four years, since the last publication of the records book, several highlights are in 2010, 69 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 2006 and 2007 with 21 Green-winged Teals each year (the record high being 22) and in 2008, 14 Northern Shovelers were recorded.

It was a great pleasure to look over YuLee's hand written document and contemplate the dedication of not only those early birders from the mid 60's but also everyone who has helped for 48 years! Thanks to all participants whether it is one hour of feeder watching or a full day in the car! I look forward to the CBC on December 16th and to the tally dinner to follow.

If I do not see you at any of our club events in December, Happy Holidays!

-Penny Warren, President

BIRD SEED SALE A SUCCESS

I would like to give a special thank you to all who bought bird seed from the club at our sale and who worked to make it a success. Thanks to you we sold 11,690 pounds of seeds in addition to the suet and bird feeders. This was 1150 pounds more than last year and will make it possible to support campers to attend Nature Camp. Treasurer Catherine Kohus reports that we made a profit of \$2226.49, which will go up a bit once we've sold the last few bags of seed.



I want to especially thank Crista Cabe for preparing the order sheets, setting up the Google ordering system and placing newspaper ads regarding our sale. Gabriel Mapel and his mother Mary

did the very important task of receiving and tabulating the orders. Linda Matkins again arranged for the space, organized the volunteers, and arranged for refreshments. My thanks go to all who showed up and helped out on that Saturday, especially Mike Reynard, Gary Lancaster, and the members of the Fort Defiance Key Club who worked so hard loading the seed into vehicles.

Hopefully your hungry birds are enjoying those seeds packed by Amish workers in Ohio that are now filling your feeders. Due to the influx of Pine Siskins and Purple Finches you may be running short on feed. Fortunately I do have one 10# and one 20# Niger left over. I also have 50# of Sunflower and two bags of 20# peanuts. If you can use this seed call me at 540-337-0471 or send me an email at grantdws@comcast.net.

-Grant Simmons

CAMEROON ADVENTURE

I set off from Staunton in March of this year, with trepidation, to meet up with eight total strangers in an exotic and foreign land...Cameroon, West Africa.



I had lived in West Africa more than thirty years previously but this was uncharted territory for me. The only experience I had of Cameroon was reading the delightful books written by Gerald Durrell. They had sparked my desire to someday travel there and years later that desire was fulfilled.

Cameroon is located in the intergrade between western and central Africa. Consequently it has a vast diversity of habitats. From lowland rainforest to semi desert Sahel; from acacia woodland to afro-montane forest. And we experienced them all.

In the arid Sub-Saharan north we visited Waza National Park where we checked off Ostrich and the regal Arabian Bustard. In the central region we spent time at Benoue National Park and Ngaoundaba Ranch, an area consisting largely of acacia woodland and riparian habitats. At Benoue we saw the much anticipated Egyptian Plover, also known as "The Crocodile Bird". This charming bird, voted by the group as favorite bird of the trip, was seen scratching busily along the sandy banks of the



Benoue River well within snatching distance of sunning Nile Crocodiles. An unexpected treat was a perched Pel's Fishing Owl, a most coveted species. At Ngaoundaba we added a snoozing Standard Winged Nightjar. As the bird flushed it appeared as though two smaller birds were in hot pursuit but, in fact, it was the trailing edges of the bird's wings. It was a bizarre and memorable sight.

Our next destination was the afro-montane forest of Mount Cameroon. During the five mile hike up the mountain trail we passed through several habitat zones before reaching the tree line. On the way we saw such specialties as Shelley's Olive-back, Mount Cameroon Spierops and Yellow-breasted Boubou. I was quite pleased to make it to the top with "The Big Boys" because we lost a few members of the group along the way.

In the hot and humid southern region we visited Korup National Park, consisting of lowland rainforest. There we went in search of the prehistoric looking Picathartes, the most sought after bird of the trip. The quest for the Picathartes, endemic to Cameroon, was certainly the most arduous experience of the trip. It entailed crossing a terrifying (to me) suspension bridge, hiking into the rainforest five miles, setting up camp for a two night's stay and then an additional two mile trek to our destination, the roost of the fabled Picathartes. After an hour of sitting motionless and silent in the pouring rain under a giant leaning boulder the bird appeared, hissing and hopping on and off of its roost nest. It was quite a spectacle. The mood during the hike back to our campsite was elated in spite of

the continuing downpour and pitch dark. There were several casualties and a pair of mangled glasses en route but the promise of beer, albeit tepid, beckoned us.

From Korup we were off to the montane regions of Mt Kupe and Mt Bakossi, home to a number of Cameroon endemics. There we were rewarded with rarities such as Fiery-breasted Bush-shrike, the diminutive African Piculet and Woodhouse's Antpecker. It was then on to the beautiful and endemic rich area of the Bamenda Highlands. Fortune was with us as we had great views of the highly endangered Bannerman's Turaco and the elusive Bwanga Scrub Warbler.

On our trip back to Douala and the airport we were in high spirits as we recounted the highlights of our three week adventure. The journey was punctuated with numerous stops to "tick" some additions to our list, including a stunning Marsh Tchagra and an unexpected Ovambo Sparrowhawk. However we made it back in good time for a quick detour to La Digue on the coast where we racked up our final species of the trip, Pink-backed Pelican and some very obliging Carmelite and Mangrove Sunbirds.

Our group tallied 616 species of birds and 40 species of mammals. We were ebullient. It was the highest number of bird species recorded on any of the tours conducted in Cameroon. 389 were life birds for me and, considering that I had two previous birding trips to Africa under my belt, I was immensely pleased.

As is the case in many developing countries, Cameroon lacks the infrastructure and amenities that we Americans take for granted. Roads are in poor repair and sometimes nonexistent. Accommodations are often rudimentary at best, without electricity and hot water. Food is very basic, consisting primarily of rice, plantain, bony fish and tough chicken...sometimes even for breakfast! However the country held a fascination for me.



Perhaps it was a reminder of my youth and Peace Corps days. It presented a challenge that I had not experienced in some time. And yet it was a challenge that I eagerly embraced.

Shortly after my return a friend asked me what the worst and best experiences of my trip were. After a moment's pause it came to me. The worst experience was the feeling that overcame me when confronted with the dreaded suspension bridge. Three flights of stairs up and at tree canopy level my breath shortened and my heart pounded as I contemplated crossing the rocky river far below. And high on the list of best experiences of the trip was the feeling of elation and self-affirmation that I had upon crossing over. Those two words can very simply summarize my feelings about my Cameroon experience...the feelings that I carried home to Staunton...elation and self-affirmation. My three weeks in Cameroon were more than just a vacation. They were an enlightening, challenging and truly incredible Cameroon Adventure.



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-Lisa Hamilton

Christmas Bird Counts

**The Augusta CBC
Sunday, December 16th**

All members are welcome to take part & this year the CBC has done away with the fees for taking part. Packets will be handed out at the Dec. meeting.

At 6:00pm, a pot luck tally dinner will be held at Penny Warren's home 215 Kalorama Street (around the corner from Stonewall Jackson Hotel) Allen will provide the meats and Penny will provide a seafood entree

For info or to sign up for a specific area contact Allen at birdergonewild@yahoo.com

-Allen Larner

**Waynesboro CBC
January 5, 2013
Sign up by December 17th**

What rarities will turn up on the Christmas Count this year? Will you be the one to report a Lark Sparrow, Dickcissel, Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl, or Common Redpoll?

The Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count — one of the two counts sponsored by our Bird Club — will be held on Saturday, January 5, the last day of the count period set by the National Audubon Society. The territory for this count centers in Sherando; it spans the Blue Ridge and includes parts of Augusta and Nelson Counties and a portion of the city of Waynesboro. While most of the territories are generally assigned to long-time participants, newcomers are welcome and are generally assigned to team up with veteran team leaders. In addition, anyone who likes to hike in the winter can be virtually guaranteed a stretch of the Appalachian Trail as long as the Blue Ridge Parkway has not been closed due to inclement weather. (Hiking in the National Forest is not recommended because January 5 is the last day of deer hunting season.)

Feeder watchers who live within the count circle (that is, within 7.5 miles of Sherando) are especially needed. To find out if you live within the circle, email me with your address. I will also bring the map to the December club meeting. If you would like to go owling, you will likely be able to count almost anywhere within the circle; just let me know in advance where you plan to go.

There will be yummy food and fabulous company that evening at the free tally dinner. Details will be provided to participants.

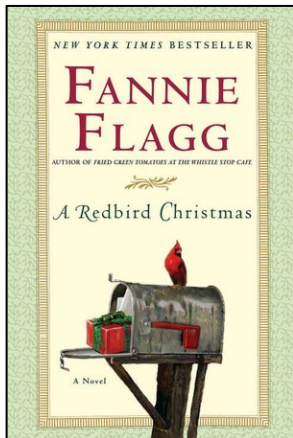
Crista Cabe
cristacabe@gmail.com
540-234-9155 (home) or 540-255-4677 (mobile)

Book Swap

Do you have a book or two related to birds that you would like to swap? Please bring them to the December club holiday dinner program and we will have a table set up for a book exchange.

Holiday Book Nook

Red Bird Christmas by Fannie Flagg (author of *Fried Green Tomatoes*)



The book begins in Chicago with Oswald T. Campbell, 52, living a lonely and somewhat miserable life, and with a recent diagnosis of a terminal illness and a doctor's suggestion to move to a warmer climate. Campbell was so named because as a baby, he arrived at the doorstep of an orphanage and was given the last name Campbell for the can of soup that

was in the basket with him and 'T' standing for tomato. Right there, with that as a backdrop to this character's story, the book was off to an engaging start.

With the doctor's recommendation and a brochure for Lost River, Alabama, Oswald packs his bag and heads south. This sleepy community is full of colorful characters, broken hearts, unrequited love, a little girl with a crippled leg in need of surgery, a long standing feud with the Creoles, and a special little redbird named Jack.

What do you get when you combine all of this into a novel? You get a charming story full of faith, hope and friendship and one with a magical ending to delight all readers. This touching story just might put a little bit of extra spirit into your holiday season!

Although I usually stick with non-fiction write-ups, this was too heartwarming of a story not to share and, after all, a bird is a central character!! As an additional bonus, there are 19 southern recipes included at the end of the book from Southern-style Pecan Pie to Polka Dots' Secret-Weapon Tomato Aspic!!

-Penny Warren

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

November 12, 2012

7:00 pm Covenant Presbyterian Church

President Penny Warren called the meeting to order by introducing several visitors. Members shared about sightings, Vic reporting on Sand Hill

Cranes and Gabriel on Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks.

Penny shared about the banding of the Saw Whet Owls by Clair Mellinger reporting that one was caught that had a geolocator having been banded in Pennsylvania. The locator will be returned to the banding research group. She stated that over 200 owls had been banded this year.

Vic reported that we have 108 members with 52 of them having renewed.

Jo shared that she would be leading a field trip on Wednesday to McCormick's Mill. Gabriel reminded members that he will be leading a trip to Rip Rap.

Penny stated the seed sale was a success. Grant thanked members for buying seed and listed the extra seed that was available.

LeAnn Cline reported that Brule Peter John banded the hummingbird at her place and declared it to be an adult female Rufus.

Linda announced that the December meeting is a meal with the meat being furnished. Members are to bring their festive food to share.

Penny announced that the Augusta County Christmas Bird Count will be held December 16th with a Pot Luck reporting dinner at her house.



The Waynesboro Count will be held January 5th with sign up with Crista by December 17th.

President Warren stated that articles for the Newsletter are due next week.

The Youth Birders are to meet on December 1st and any interested persons should contact Gabriel. Peter Nebel introduced Keith Folsom from Springdale Gardens who shared attracting birds with water creations. He showed slides of a number of different possibilities for water in the garden.

- Grant Simmons, Secretary

Welcome New Member!

Eve Gaige from Palmyra, VA

Treasurer's Report

submitted by Catherine Kohus
10/01/2012 – 10/31/2012

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE – 9/01/2012	\$5,325.30	
INCOME	\$ 771.94	
EXPENSES	\$ 37.00	
BALANCE – 9/30/2012		\$ 6,060.24
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE – 10/01/2012	\$ 15,580.56	
INCOME	\$ 5,845.42	
EXPENSES	\$ 8,592.44	
BALANCE - 10/31/2012		\$ 12,833.54
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 10/31/2012		\$ 18,893.78

Bird Quiz!



Can you identify the bird below?

The answer will be revealed next month.
Happy guessing!

Last Month: Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Virginia Society of Ornithology Website
virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club Website
www.augustabirdclub.org

Birding Maps

Augusta County: <http://g.co/maps/49rjq>
Rockingham County: <http://g.co/maps/3xutb>
Albemarle County: <http://g.co/maps/7t6f4>

2013 Membership Renewal

Dear member,

Your 2013 Augusta Bird Club membership renewal is due very soon! If you have already renewed, thank you! If you still need to renew, please mail me your dues along with the completed form below by December 31. Checks should be made out to Augusta Bird Club. Alternatively, you can give me your payment at the next Club meeting. Note that any amount contributed over regular dues is tax deductible as a charitable contribution (see website for further details). If you will not be renewing, please let me know that too so I can update my records. Contact me any time if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
Vic Laubach
ABC Membership Chair
Phone: 540-949-4497
Email: laubach@virginia.edu

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Augusta Bird Club 2013 dues form (please include with payment)			
Name: _____	Amount enclosed: \$ _____		
Address: _____ _____ _____	Mail to: Victor Laubach ABC Membership 104 Lanchester Ct Waynesboro, VA 22980		
Phone: _____			
Email: _____			
I wish to receive the Newsletter via:			
Email		Postal Mail	
Check box to indicate membership category:			
	Individual	Couple	Family
Meadowlark (Regular)	\$15	\$25	\$30
Cardinal (Contributing)	\$25	\$35	\$40
Kingbird (Sustaining)	\$50	\$60	\$75