



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 48, No.4
December 2013

*"How did it get so late so soon? Its night before it's afternoon.
December is here before its June. My goodness how the time has flown.
How did it get so late so soon?"*

~ Dr. Seuss

NOVEMBER MEETING

Date: Monday, December 9th, 6:30 PM
NOTE TIME CHANGE

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

Program: Holiday Party!

It's that time of year to gather with your bird club friends for good food and good fellowship.

Please bring your favorite side dish, salad, or dessert to share with the group. The club will provide ham, turkey, bread, iced tea, water, and coffee. We will be having a silent auction of the beautifully framed and signed print of "The Mad Bluebird" which was donated to the club by Jessie Shaw. The proceeds from the sale will go toward support of environmental programs. There will also be door prizes! Feel free to bring your family.

If you have any questions, call Linda Matkins at 540-383-8229



FIELD TRIPS

Sunday, December 15th: Augusta CBC
Meeting Place & Time: All Day
Coordinator: Allen Lerner

Packets will be handed out at the December meeting. Contact Allen Lerner at 540-280-3423 or bird-ergonewild@yahoo.com

Tally dinner will be at John & Nancy Sphar's home at 6pm . 234 W Frederick St. Staunton .

THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH *Messenger from Heaven*

As I was leaving Charlottesville on what I thought would be any other given day, I began my return to Staunton, going south on Rt. 29 to hop back on 64, when I saw something in the middle of the road. As I got closer, I could see that it was a Red-tailed Hawk sitting upright and alive in the middle of the two lanes!! I pulled over and another car was already parked on the side of the road but I did not know

if they, too, had stopped for the hawk or for another reason as no one had gotten out of the car. I had a small box and blanket in the back of my



car and as I was getting those items, the driver of

the other car approached and said he just finished speaking with the Wildlife Center inquiring what to do. He saw me with the box and blanket and was ecstatic because the Wildlife Center suggested getting a box and a blanket, neither of which he had! My fellow rescuer said he would attempt to divert the traffic if I could grab the hawk. As we both looked at the oncoming traffic, there were two, 18-wheelers headed toward the hawk and my thought was the hawk was a goner for sure. Far from an easy task and not one without major risk, he managed to get the trucks off in the left lane. I ran out and threw the blanket on top of the hawk, picked him up, he fussed a little under the blanket but I managed to get him and myself off the road as quickly as possible. It was an adrenaline-producing experience. Neither of us could have done this task alone so it was most fortunate that two of us had stopped. We called the Wildlife Center and said that I would be bringing the hawk as quickly as possible.

As I was driving to the Center, I started to think about all of the qualities of a hawk and how it related to my mom and the intersection of this specific event for me. You see, I just had a phone call from my brother less than an hour or so before rescuing the hawk that my mom had died. I thought about her grace and beauty, her stoic, resolute, persevering nature, attributes that I would apply also to a hawk.

I dropped the hawk off at the Wildlife Center and called the next day to inquire. He did not have any broken bones or internal injuries but lesions on both eyes.



As I continued to reflect on the hawk and my mom throughout the day and into the evening, I googled the symbology of hawks and the first website I found spoke of Native American beliefs and that the hawk is seen as a messenger from heaven! I felt truly blessed for the powerful encounter on that day of November 14th.

-Penny Warren, President

2014 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Dear members,

This is the last newsletter call for renewing your Augusta Bird Club membership for 2014. If you have already renewed, thank you! If you still need to renew, please mail me your dues along with the completed form found at the end of this newsletter by December 31st. 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). Contact me any time if you have any questions.

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

A NOTE OF THANKS

17-November-2013

To: Augusta Bird Club

My sister Mary and I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Augusta Bird Club for supporting the recently completed project at Gypsy Hill Park in memory of our mother, YuLee Lerner.

She would be pleased with this special recognition! She was so proud to have been a member of your organization for so many years and enjoyed being known as the "Bird Lady" of Staunton. Out of all of your projects, Mother was most enthused about assisting deserving students through the Nature Camp Scholarship. We hope that some of the

memorial donations will be added to your Nature Camp fund in order to help future students.

Chris Tuttle, Director of Parks and Recreation, and his staff have been most cooperative in making this project happen. Parks donated the beautiful limestone boulder for mounting the bronze plaque as well as two white dogwood trees. One was planted at Montgomery Hall Park and the other at Gypsy Hill. They are lovely memorials to Mother.

The dogwood tree connection is very meaningful to our family because of our grandfather Ruff's position as City manager of the City of Staunton and his desire to highlight the beauty of Gypsy Hill Park.

With sincere appreciation,

- Sarah Wilkins & Mary Shiflet

NOTES FROM THE FIELD Eastern Shore

A few Augusta Bird Club members spent this past weekend birding at the Eastern Shore, an annual trip organized by Allen Lerner. We had an awesome weekend with great weather totaling 118 species! The weather on Fri was beautiful in the 60s. We (Allen, Darryl Schwalm and I) left Staunton at 5:30am Friday and arrived at Island #1 of



the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel where we birded until it was time to meet up with others (Brenda Tekin, Pam Howie plus 4 others) at 10am. Brenda Tekin arranged for a police escort to Islands #2, 3 and 4. We spent 2 hours birding the islands plus the scenic overlook on the north end with highlights

including: 5 Surf Scoter, 2 White-winged Scoter, 64 Black Scoter, 1 Long-tailed Duck, 1 Red-throated Loon, 21 Common Loon, 52



Northern Gannet, 12 Oystercatcher, 6 Ruddy Turnstone, 38 Sanderling, 31 Purple Sandpiper, 8 Horned Lark, 1 Coopers hawk and 1 Peregrine Falcon. For much of the remaining weekend Allen, Darryl and I birded separately from Brenda and Pam, hoping for a magical rare-bird phone call from the other! My report will highlight on what Allen, Darryl and I found.

We stopped at Eastern Shore NWR for lunch



and discovered that Brenda had a dead battery (replaced with new one later in day). Here we had 17 Snow Goose, 2 Bald Eagle, 1 SS Hawk, 2 RT Hawk and 2 Palm Warbler. Along Magotha Rd we found our first target bird (2 Eurasian Collared-Doves) plus a Merlin, 3 Bald Eagle, 3 Eastern Phoebe and a Fox Sparrow. We continued on to Cape Charles where we found our second target bird (a pair of Common Gallinules) plus 4 Pied-billed Grebe, 2 Bald Eagle, 3 American Coot and 1 Kestrel. We then visited the Cheriton Landfill and were greeted by at least 150 Black Vultures, 220 Canada Geese, 155 Herring Gulls as well as 28 Gadwall, 21 American Wigeon, 6 Black Duck, 26 Hooded Merganser, 38 American Coot, 3 Bald Eagle and a flock of 21 Wild Turkey along Rt 13 near the landfill. A stop at Willis Warf yielded 12 Bufflehead, 10 Semipalmated Plover, 170 Willet, 250 Marbled Godwit, 50 Dunlin and 1 Short-billed Dowitcher. We made it to Chincoteague NWR as the sun was setting and were able to call in 2 Clapper Rail from the reeds at the entrance. We all met at the Village Restaurant for a hardy seafood dinner and a perfect ending to our first day!

On Saturday we birded all morning in Chincoteague NWR around the Visitor's Center, Tom's



Cove and Swan Cove, scanning for two more target birds (Bar-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Wigeon). We found the Eurasian Wigeon (a male) but no luck with the Bar-tailed Godwit. Overhead we watched dozens of large Snow Geese skeins flying by totaling 845 birds. Other highlights here included 14 Tundra Swan, 9 Gadwall, 40 Northern Pintail, 94 American Wigeon, 88 Black Duck, 30 Mallard, 40 Bufflehead, 5 Hooded Merganser, 1 Red-breasted Merganser, 10 Ruddy Duck, 3 Horned Grebe, 6 Little Blue Heron, 5 White Ibis, 1 Northern Harrier, 9 Black-bellied Plover, 8 Semipalmated Plover, 48 Greater Yellowlegs, 1 Willet, 12 Marbled Godwit, 8 Sanderling, 72 Dunlin, 50 Forster's Tern and 1 Common Loon.

We found 16 Brant off the southeast side of the island. We then walked through the forested Chincoteague Island Nature Trail and found lots of birds including 14 Brown-headed Nuthatch, 3 Brown Creeper, 2 Winter Wren (one singing), both kinglets, 62 Swamp Sparrow and 42 White-throated Sparrow. Then we drove down toward Saxis and found a Long-tailed Duck, 8 Bufflehead, 2 Northern Harrier, 1 Bald Eagle, 1 Red-tailed Hawk and 4



Swamp Sparrow.

We made it back to the Chincoteague Wildlife Loop at 3pm and birded until sunset (a gorgeous orange sunset!) with following highlights: 130 Snow Goose (overhead), 38 Tundra Swan, 168 Black Duck, 114 Northern Shoveler, 285 Green-winged Teal, 7 Little Blue Heron, 9 White Ibis, 2 Bald Eagle, 1 Great-horned Owl, 1 Fox Sparrow and 2 Savannah Sparrow. The wild ponies were up close by the road at sunset! Just after sunset, we pulled into the Woodland Trail parking lot and played some Screech Owl whinnies whereupon we got immediate responses from a Great-horned Owl and two nearby Screech Owls! One of the screech owls flew in and landed 15 feet above our heads and gave us a good stare-down! Back at the entrance we called

in another Clapper Rail. We all met at Maria's for another great dinner with a quirky little waitress!

Sunday was a whole different story with 24-32 degrees and high north winds (25-35mph), but it was sunny! We did an early drive out to Toms Cove, which was fairly empty but had a few highlights: 60 Snow Geese (flyovers), a Northern Harrier (fun to watch hunt in the high winds), 3 Black-bellied Plover, 3 Semipalmated Plover and 5 Least Sandpiper. Another rare "bird" sighting, witnessed by few people, was Allen Lerner wearing a coat (I have photo documentation)!



We proceeded south to Kiptopeke State Park in an unsuccessful search for another target bird: a Western Kingbird. Highlights here: 2 Bald Eagle, 1 Northern Harrier, 2 Red-tailed Hawk, 20 Horned Lark and 3 Vesper Sparrow. After a short stint at the hawk watch, we drove through the Eastern Shore NWR and then stopped at Island #1 for lunch. The wind and sea-spray was quite wicked, and all birds were on the leeward side of the island sitting on the water near the rocks. We got a super



close look at a beautiful male White-winged Scoter.

Overall, it was a fantastic birding trip! Thank you Allen for organizing the trip and thank you Brenda for getting us on those islands! We totaled 118 species (112 by us and 6 other species that Brenda and Pam found: Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, Bonaparte's Gulls, Hermit Thrush, Sapsucker and a Black Tern)! A complete list is below, and some photos can be viewed here if interested:

<http://vehawk.smugmug.com/BirdingPhotos/Easter-n-Shore-VA-1122-242013>

Good birding!
- Vic Laubach

QUAIL RELEASE 27 October 2013

“Just because the problem seems unsolvable doesn’t give us the right to give up”.

I can’t remember who wrote that but it sticks in my mind. And just like the people trying to find that one blight resistant American Chestnut tree, Bobwhite Quail lovers keep hoping that maybe someday one mating pair from pen-raised birds will survive and reproduce. We haven’t found the resistant chestnut tree nor have we had success with re-establishing Quail using pen raised birds...but it doesn’t stop us from trying.

5:15am...34 degrees...The air is thick with moisture and the moon lights my way down the path to the river. I carry a small cage with ten pen-raised Northern Bobwhites. The Indian Grass, Big Bluestem and other native grasses arch over my head. The mowed path crunches under my footsteps. Now on the bank of the river I set the carrier down then scatter some mixed bird seed around.



The moon’s reflection is on the river. With a silent reverence for nature and faith in the process of life, I open the door to the crate, “Good luck my friends. May you have good health and prosper”, I tell them. I turn and walk away, the soft wind ruffles the seed heads of the native grasses. The ripples of the river fade.

The odds of survival for these birds is pretty close to zero but if just one pair survive the gauntlet of hawks, falcons, foxes, domestic cats and other

predators through the winter, then just maybe they will reproduce. Ours didn’t make it last year.

Thanks to our friends in Middlebrook and Swoope we released 66 birds last night on five separate farms with good quail habitat.

Quail populations began their plummet in our Valley back in the late 70’s. Today the Northern Bobwhite is one of the Audubon Society’s “common birds” in decline, their population declining 80% since 1967. Why? We really don’t know. There are lots of theories. Many people and organizations are trying to find out like the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative. My opinion – death by a thousand cuts.

- Domestic cats roam free...over 90 million of them, invasive and non-native.
- Tall fescue, with its poisonous endophyte dominates our grasslands; it is also invasive and non-native.
- Hedgerows and weedy odd areas continue to diminish.
- Mowed and manicured is the “look” everyone wants.
- No one traps anymore....so we have more egg predators like raccoons, skunks and opossums.
- There are no bounties on hawks anymore.....so we have more raptors.

I’m not blaming the natural predators; Quail have always rebounded from natural causes. In my opinion the three biggest threats to Quail are the un-natural causes – tall fescue and cats, and lack of habitat.

Habitat restoration is the best hope for Bobwhites. Here’s what you can do:

- Plant native prairie meadows and shrub thickets. Suppress natural succession with fire and disturbance. Below is a picture of what a “prescribed burn” of native prairie should look like.



- Leave some areas unmowed.
- Plant food plots or leave some grain in the field.
- Keep cats indoors! Domestic cats are probably the most invasive non-native mammal in North America.



Virginia , USDA , Virginia Working Landscapes , the Piedmont Environmental Council ,Valley Conservation Council and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation all have programs to help landowners establish habitat. Contact your local Soil and Water Conservation District or your local USDA office for assistance. You may also contact me, I will be glad help you.

- Bobby Whitescarver
540-280-7134

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MEETING MINUTES

November 11, 2013
Covenant Presbyterian Church

Penny Warren called the meeting to order at 7:00 meeting in the Covenant Presbyterian Church. She introduced new member Linda McDaniel and welcomed a fellow Master Naturalist to the meeting.

When asked what members were seeing Vic Laubach shared about an experience with a Golden Eagle cruising just over his head in pursuit of a Canada goose. For him it was a stirring experience.

Allen reported on the planned field trip later this month to the Eastern Shore with one slot left for the group touring the Bay Bridge Islands. If you are interested please contact Brenda Tekin who is making arrangements.

Dan Perkuchin is planning a field trip to visit the Saw Whet banding with Clair Mellinger Thursday night. If you are interested in going with Dan to experience the banding of these unique Owls, let Penny know and she will notify Dan.

Vic urged that members renew their memberships for the coming year by the December meeting.

He also reported on the Hawk Watch stating we broke the record for sighting migrating Merlin's. In

addition Gabriel who has been manning the watch on a regular basis recorded the 18th Golden Eagle for the season. He noted that hawks are still being spotted with a number of Red Tails still moving through.

Gabriel asked for volunteers in the remaining days to accompany him at the watch.

Grant Simmons thanked members for supporting the annual bird seed sale and especially for picking up their ordered seed on pick up day. All the ordered seed was picked up and as planned we ordered extras for those who may want more. He noted that there is some Mixed seed, several bags of Niger seed and 1 bag of Safflower seed available for sale. He asked that you check with him if you are interested (540-337-0471).

Lisa Hamilton, Treasurer, reported that to date we have a profit of over \$3900 on the sale which is the best we have done recently. She noted that when we sell the remaining seed we will top \$4000. She also thanked members for making that figure possible.

Linda Matkins reported that our December meeting is a dinner meeting starting at 6:30 pm. She reminded members to bring their favorite dessert with the Club providing the meal. She shared that there will be door prizes and it was agreed to conduct a silent auction for a framed picture of a Blue Bird.

Allen reported that the Augusta County Christmas count will be held the 15th of December with the tally dinner at the home of John and Nancy Spahr.

Paul Callo sent an apology to those receiving mail notices that the mailing was late announcing tonight's meeting.

Peter Nebel introduced member John Spahr who presented a program on Birding Myths, Musings and Mirth: A Farrago (a confused mixture) of Fiction, Fact and Fun. As usual his program was all of these.

- Grant Simmons, Secretary



TREASURER'S REPORT

10/01/2013 – 10/31/2013
as submitted by Lisa S. Hamilton

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE – 10/01/2013	\$5,947.22	
INCOME	\$522.39	
EXPENSES	\$450.25	
BALANCE – 10/31/2013		\$6,019.36
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE – 10/01/2013	\$17,490.71	
INCOME	\$13187.57	
EXPENSES	\$8,575.32	
BALANCE - 10/31/2013		\$22,102.96
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 10/31/2013		\$28,122.32

BIRD QUIZ!

Can you identify this bird?



The answer will be revealed next month.
Happy guessing!

Last Month: Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

If you would like to “nominate” a photo for the newsletter, please contact the editor, Paul Callo at pcallo@mbc.edu

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>

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Augusta Bird Club 2014 dues form (please include with payment)			
Name: _____	Amount enclosed: \$ _____		
Address: _____	Mail to: Victor Laubach ABC Membership 104 Lanchester Ct Waynesboro, VA 22980		

Check box to indicate membership category:			
	Individual	Couple	Family
Meadowlark (Regular)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30
Cardinal (Contributing)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35	<input type="checkbox"/> \$40
Kingbird (Sustaining)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75