



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 49, No.1
September 2014

*"One long last sigh to love and thee,
then back to busy life again"*

~ Byron

September Meeting

Date: Monday, September 8th, 7:00 PM

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

Program: *Hummingbirds: The Americas' Avian Jewels*

Speaker: Dr. John Spahr

Here in our region we are familiar with one species of hummingbird, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, that visits us every year during the warmer months. It winters in Central America



and actually flies across the Gulf of Mexico non-stop. In the western US there are an additional dozen types of hummingbirds. In the entire world there are about 330 species in the hummingbird family and all of them are in the western hemisphere, mostly South and Central America. There are no hummingbirds in



Europe, Africa or Asia. These small and beautiful creatures inhabit a wide variety of habitats and are renown for

their amazing flying skills, including the ability to fly backwards. Flight and fancy are only a few of the amazing aspects of hummingbirds that John will discuss, assisted by lots of photos.



Field Trips

Saturday, September 6th: Confusing Fall Warblers
Meeting Place & Time: Afton Inn parking lot at 8:00AM rain or shine

Coordinator: Allen Lerner
birdergonewild@yahoo.com

Join Allen Lerner on this half day adventure where we will look for migrating Warblers, Tanagers, Flycatchers, Vireos, and Thrushes to name a few along the Blue Ridge Parkway and Rt. 610. After the field trip you can stop by the Hawk Watch to see what is migrating through.

Dress for the weather that day and bring snacks.

Wednesday, Sept. 24th: McCormick's Mill
Meeting Place & Time: Colonial Mall Parking Lot behind McDonald's at 8:30AM or 9AM at the Mill.
Coordinator: Jo King, kingbird10@yahoo.com or 540-430-0186

Join Jo King on this adventure to the southern most point in Augusta County. On this easy walk thru the open fields and mixed wood lots and a pond or two, we may experience seeing waterfowl, early wintering sparrows, kinglets and maybe a late summer migrant bird. Dress for the weather and bring a snack. Rain will cancel this outing.



Monday, September 29th: Abrams Creek Wetlands and VA State Arboretum at Blandy Farm
Meeting Place & Time: 6:30 a.m., Food Lion, Coalter Street
Coordinator: Penny Warren, penny@Staunton.com

Please join Penny on a day trip to the Abrams Creek Wetlands and VA State Arboretum at Blandy Farm. During part of the morning, will be joined by Dr. David Carr, Director of the State Arboretum, who has a recorded list of over 200 birds at the arboretum. Wear comfortable walking shoes, bring snacks, lunch, etc. and if the weather cooperates we can have a picnic somewhere along the way on our day's journey. We will plan to be back in Staunton around 3:00.



THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH

Heartbreak Hotels on Bell's Lane

Welcome back to the start of the fall bird club season! I hope everyone had an enjoyable summer, here, there or beyond!

I was very excited to get the nesting boxes on Bell's Lane cleaned and prepped in late February for the upcoming spring and summer nesting season. However, as the spring migrants came

through and summer residents were returning, there appeared to be fewer numbers of Bluebirds. Many of the 'regulars,' e.g. cyclists, walkers, runners, etc., on Bell's Lane questioned me off and on wanting to know where the Bluebirds were, why were there so few? If only I had answers rather than speculations.



Slowly but surely by the latter part of April a few Bluebirds were beginning to build their nests as well as one Chickadee and a handful of Tree Swallows nests. And then, things became strange, nest after nest with eggs, both Bluebirds and Swallows, appeared to be abandoned for no apparent reason and this was throughout the summer, not only during a particularly hot week now and then. The eggs were intact, in most cases, but some had obvious predation but those were the exceptions. To the best of my knowledge, only four Tree Swallows and two Bluebirds fledged this season from the boxes.

My spirits were buoyed a bit when I was doing one last check toward the end of July and I found a Carolina Wren nest with three eggs and then two babies. I checked one last time this morning before writing this column and there are feathered babies in the nest. I am holding out hope to maybe break the county nesting record for a Carolina Wren. I will tell you at the September meeting. A bit of a positive note after too many Heartbreak Hotels!



I hope to see many of you at the September meeting.

-Penny Warren, President

ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH

Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch Begins 39th Season



My son, a die hard Jacksonville Jaguars' fan, recently wrote *"Can you smell that? Nothing else in the world smells like that. Breathe it in. That's the smell of football season!"*

I share that same enthusiasm for fall raptor migration!

Our 39th season counting raptors at Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch kicks off this Friday, August 15 and will run through the end of November.

Mark your calendars for our upcoming open house event

Where the Raptors Soar--A Day at the Hawk Watch

Sunday, September 14, 2014
11am - 3pm

The event will include exhibits, educational materials, raptor prints, and a special raptor presentation by The Wildlife Center of Virginia at 1pm.

Free food and drinks will be provided.

We welcome visitors who wish to watch, learn and even help spot hawks in the sky. It's a beautiful venue where folks and their families can visit, bring a lawn chair and picnic and hang out.

On behalf of all of our volunteer counters, we hope to see you at the hawk watch this fall!

Brenda
Brenda Tekin, Co-coordinator
Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch
Waynesboro, VA

http://www.rockfish_gap_hawk_watch.com

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Birding in Arizona and New Mexico

This summer, during the last five days of June, I fulfilled a long-deferred desire to visit southern Arizona, where one may see many semi-tropical birds that are found nowhere else in the United States. Although I missed a few target birds, my endeavors were quite successful overall. To get to the ultimate destination, I drove across the south-central plains (with my father as passenger), seeing a number of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers in southwestern Missouri and Texas. They are simply amazing.



I didn't have a specific itinerary for my trip, but had a rough idea of my priority target areas based on a book on birding in Arizona which my brother John lent to me. (He has been there at least three times.) My first target area was the irrigated farmlands north of Marana, which is northwest of Tuc-

son. I was pleased to see Black-tailed Gnatcatchers and Phainopeplas at several locations, as well as Verdins. At the Sabino Canyon visitor's center northeast of Tucson, in the midst of tall Saguaros and many other cactus species, I saw Cactus Wrens, a Lucy's Warbler, a Gila Woodpecker, a Brown-crested Flycatcher, and even some Purple Martins; that was a surprise. But the biggest thrill was when I came upon a strange brown-camouflaged bird lying in the shade. I got some great closeup photos before it flew away, and later determined that it was a Lesser Nighthawk.

To escape the desert heat (it got up to 110 degrees), I decided to explore the Santa Catalina Mountains, just north of Tucson. About one-third of the way up, I came across my first Painted Redstarts, Acorn Woodpeckers, Spotted Towhees, a Plumbeous Vireo (similar to the Blue-headed Vireo), and Yellow-eyed Juncos. Driving to an even higher elevation, in a cool, lush coniferous forest, I found sev-



eral Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, a Broad-billed Hummingbird, a Cordilleran Flycatcher, and near the summit of Mount Lemmon (9,000+ foot elevation), I saw a few Wild Turkeys. Very unexpected!

From the Tucson area, I headed south toward Green Valley, where I saw a Ladder-backed Woodpecker, a Canyon Towhee, and my first-ever Pyrrhuloxia, not far from where I also saw its relative, the Northern Cardinal. Yet another surprise eastern species! Within a mile or so of the Mexican border in Nogales, I heard the scream of a raptor, and before long spotted a Gray Hawk in the tree tops. That was spectacular. Then I turned east toward the town of Patagonia, where there is a famous nature preserve operated by the Nature Conservancy. It was in that vicinity that I spotted some Bridled Titmice, Vermilion Flycatchers, Lucy's Warblers, and a Bewick's Wren. But best of all was getting an excellent, closeup look at a bird that I have seen only on rare occasions here in the east: a Yellow-breasted Chat!



The next day I spent a few hours in the San Pedro River Riparian Area. It is a veritable oasis in the middle of the desert, a magnet for a huge variety of colorful birds. At the visitor's center there were several Blue Grosbeaks, Black-chinned Hummingbirds, and Lesser Goldfinches. Along the river itself, and the nearby pond, I saw Summer Tanagers, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, an Abert's Towhee, a Varied Bunting, a pair of American Coots (!?), and some Common Ground Doves, among others mentioned above. I was delirious with sensory overload.

My final target area in Arizona was the Chiricahua Mountains, where Elegant Trogons are often seen — but alas, not by me on this trip. (I had seen one in Costa Rica in 2005.) But as I approached the mountains through the desert, I finally got lucky with great views of two of the other target birds: a Greater Roadrunner, and a Gambel's Quail. At the Ranger's Station, I saw my first-ever Hepatic Tanager, and in the canyons and mountains up ahead I

saw Mexican Jays, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, and an Ash-throated Flycatcher.

The final leg of my adventure (when my father rejoined me) took us north along the Rio Grande through New Mexico. In the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, there were many Double-crested Cormorants, Pied-bill Grebes, and my first-ever Cinnamon Teals. Further north in the Las Vegas National Wildlife



Refuge, I spotted a large brown bird perched on a fence post. Could it be? Yes — a Burrowing Owl! In the panhandle of Oklahoma, we saw a pair of Swainson's Hawks. Then in Dodge City, Kansas, I had my first good look at a Mississippi Kite. Near the center of the state, in a wetland area called Cheyenne Bottoms, I saw several American Avocets and Black-necked Stilts.

Overall, I saw a total of 40 new bird species, give or take a couple. My casual approach to bird traveling isn't for everyone, but I get more enjoyment out of spontaneous discovery. If I had gone on one of those guided tours, I'm sure I would have seen more species. Likewise, I really should have knocked on doors of some of the houses where bird feeders are maintained in Portal, Arizona. My big "misses" included Black-headed Grosbeaks, Western Tanagers, and Blue-throated Hummingbirds. (I learned that many more hummingbirds are seen in Arizona late in the summer, after the typical heavy rains and bird migration begin.) But whatever travel approach you prefer, southern Arizona should be near the top of any serious birder's "bucket list" of places to see. You *won't* be disappointed!

-Andrew Clem



BLUE RIDGE YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB NEWS



This fall marks the second anniversary anniversary of the founding of the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club and we are delighted with how far the club has come in two years. Our membership has grown from the original four members, to twenty-four youth currently participating in field trips and meetings in the past year. We have had a diverse offering of field trips, interesting and educational presentations at our meetings, and have participated in numerous conservation and citizen science projects including a Bluebird trail at PVCC, Nightjar Survey, Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Surveys, and the Rusty Blackbird Blitz.

One of the biggest changes in the club over these two years has been the lowering of age for membership. The club is now open to anyone 7 and older who has a keen interest in birds, and who demonstrate the ability to bird quiet enough on field trips so as to not disturb the birds or the experience of the other young birders. This change was initiated by our older members who felt passionate about mentoring younger birders and teaching not only bird identification and ecology, but promoting conservation of birds for future generations. The programs for our meetings have all been presented by club members, and each field trip has been lead by young birders as well. It is so very heartwarming to see club members share their passion and knowledge of birds.

As we look to the future of the club we continue to seek ways to reach out to more youth, and to share with them the joy of discovering nature up close and personal with the birds. We are working on a traveling photo exhibit featuring bird photos taken by club members. Our vision is that this exhibit will be displayed in schools, libraries, coffee shops and other public venues as a way of sparking the public's interest in birds, while promoting the club. We are excited to be in working negotiation with a local nature center to build and install a Chimney for Swifts, providing another conservation and educational opportunity for our young birders.

Lastly, we are looking forward to our participation in the 2015 Virginia Society of Ornithology meeting next May, with an offering of youth field trips, exhibits and more. It is an exciting year ahead, and we hope that young birders will flock to us, and join in the fun of discovery! Please check out our website to learn more about our club www.BlueRidgeYoungBirders.org

A THANK YOU

Dear Augusta Bird Club,

Thank you so much for your amazing support helping to send me on the experience of a lifetime, to Hog Island Audubon Camp, in Maine, this June. I hope you enjoy my report:

On Father's Day, Sunday, June 15th, I headed out on an adventure of a lifetime. I headed out on a flight, all by myself, for my very first time. I was headed from Washington Dulles Airport to Portland Maine, where Marilyn, a friend of Audubon, was going to pick me up, and take a group of us Teen Campers over to the Hog Island Audubon Camp.



There were about 7 of us teens from the airport that had flown in, another dozen or so had been driven to the camp. We arrived at about 5pm and the teens that were already there lugged all of our luggage to the Crow's Nest for us, where we would stay for the next 5 nights. We had an hour until dinner, and in that time, Sara Morris, one of the great instructors, and master bander, showed me a *Black Guillemot* - my first life bird of the trip!



Before or during dinner we met our two awesome teen leaders, Laurie, and Doug, who would be the only adults to stay with us in the Crow's Nest, and would accompany us at all times, and also the instructors, that included "Big Names" like Sara Morris, John Kricher, Tom Johnson, Steve Kress, and Scott Weidensaul.

As a vegan, I was concerned about the food situation, slightly, but it was amazing, they catered to my needs, and it was epic food that first dinner, as were all the other meals to follow over the next 5 days.

We had our first evening program, Sara gave a wonderful presentation about Fall Warbler Identification. All the evening programs were wonderful, and included a talk about migration from Scott Weidensaul, and a talk about the Atlantic Puffin restoration project from Steve Kress.



The biggest highlight of the trip was getting to go to Eastern Egg Rock, one of seven North American islands managed by ProjectPuffin, where Atlantic Puffins breed. We saw hundreds of *Atlantic Puffins*, my second life bird of the trip, including Puffins bringing fish into their nesting burrows just feet in front of me, when I was the only person sitting in a specific blind! We also saw Razorbills, and all kinds of Gulls and Terns, including *Roseate Terns*, my third and final life bird of the trip! The Arctic and Common Terns were dive-bombing us, it really hurt a couple of times :). Once a Common Tern pecked my hat off and took a couple of good swipes at my head before I could get the hat back on!

Even more amazing than the birding experiences was getting to share the experience with 17 other teens that share my passion, and all truly die-hard birders. It was so great to make so many life-long friends. And I learned a heck of a lot too about all sorts of birding things. The instructors were 100% awesome!

I highly recommend the camp to any teens 14-17 years old that can attend. It is a life-changing awesome experience. And, if you are an adult,

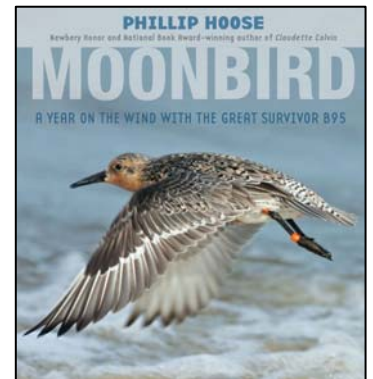
they have adult camps too! Check it out: <http://hogisland.audubon.org/>

Thanks again to all of you at the Augusta Bird Club for helping to make this experience possible...

NATURALIST BOOK NOOK

Moonbird: A Year on the Wind with the Great Survivor B95 By Phillip Hoose

A Red Knot, banded in 1995 with the band number B95 (the number is a coincidence), has been sighted a handful of times over the course of many years and it is estimated that he is 20 years old! He has been given the nickname of Moonbird due



to the numbers of miles he has traveled from Tierra del Fuego to the Canadian Arctic being the equivalent of flying to the moon and halfway back. One scientist refers to him as the 'toughest four ounces on the planet!!!' Although the book is written for middle school-aged children, it is nonetheless a fascinating and engaging account of the struggles of the Red Knots' arduous journey, not only the distance of 9,000 miles one way but also compounded with disappearing habitat from year to year and human misuse of his food supply. Estimates are that during Moonbird's life, the Red Knot population has decreased 80%. The book is enhanced with great photos, inspiring stories of the conservationists trying to help the Red Knot as well as stories of school children in various locations trying to make a difference.

Hoose, an award-winning author, participated in several of the study trips and is an amazing writer with a unique skill to blend the narrative and facts with much ease and beauty. His enthusiasm for not only the species but this one particular Red Knot is contagious. Moonbird was last seen on May 16, 2013 on Back Beach in Mispillion Harbor, Delaware!!

Happy reading!

-Penny Warren

Bird Quiz!
Can you identify this bird?



The answer will be revealed next month.
Happy guessing!

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

Treasurer's Report
submitted by Lisa Hamilton
4/01/2014 – 7/31/2014

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE – 4/01/2014	\$6,167.64	
INCOME	\$50.35	
EXPENSES	\$1,403.30	
BALANCE – 7/31/2014		\$4,815.19
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE – 4/01/2014	\$18,236.83	
INCOME	\$60.00	
EXPENSES	\$992.78	
BALANCE - 7/31/2014		\$17,304.05
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 7/31/2014		\$22,119.24

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>
