



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 49, No.8
April 2015

"If you truly love nature you will find beauty everywhere. "

~ Van Gogh

APRIL MEETING

Date: Monday, April 13th, 7:00 PM

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

Program: Birding Ethiopia

Speaker: Steve Rannels, Naturalist & Photographer, Hershey, PA

A birding trip to Ethiopia wasn't just about birds, even though we spotted over 540 species.



Ethiopia is a country of great biological diversity and human history in it's Rift Valley. It is a rich mixture of lakes and valleys, plains and

mountains, forests and plateaus. The animal life is just as varied, with antelope, warthogs, Ethiopian wolves and the magnificent Gelada baboons. The colorful and happy people produced a lasting memory.



PRE-MEETING DINNER

The pre-meeting dinner with this month's speaker will be at The Staunton Abbey Taphouse, 2221 N. Augusta St. (Terry Court Shopping Center), in Staunton, at 5:30PM. An RSVP would be most appreciated. Please email or phone Peter Nebel (nebelpk@yahoo.com or 540-942-0946) before 1PM on the day of the meeting if you wish to attend the dinner.



FIELD TRIPS

Wednesday, April 15th: McCormick's Mill

Meeting Time & Place: 8:30 am, McDonalds' Parking Lot at Staunton Mall or 9:00 am at the Mill.

Coordinator: Jo King at kingbird10@yahoo.com or [540-430-0186](tel:540-430-0186)

Come join Jo on a spring walk around the Marl Creek Trail where she hopes to see many returning spring migrants. Waterfowl, sparrows, chickadees, kinglets and bluebirds are likely to be identified. Dress for the weather and bring a snack of your liking. The trip will conclude around 11 AM. We can also check out the activity at Willow Lake in Rockbridge County.

Monday, April 27th & Friday, May 1st: Bells Lane
Meeting Time & Place: 8:00 a.m., Bells Lane
lower entrance near VDOT
Coordinator: Penny Warren,
penny@staunton.com

Penny Warren will lead two walks on Bells Lane to see what spring migration might provide. Walks will be about two miles round trip and last for about two hours.

A Morning to Float

Friends of Middle River (FOMR) would like to invite any bird club member to come for a float on April 25th, 8:00 a.m., 535 Bailey Road, Ft. Defiance, 24437. You will float for approximately 1 1/2 hours and then around 10:00 shuttle to another location in Verona and float for an hour or so back to the home of one of the guides for a picnic lunch..... all the while looking for birds!

You will need to bring water, snacks, lunch. FOMR can provide a canoe, kayak, etc. if you don't have one and they can also provide a guide if you are not familiar with floating.

Please RSVP to Carolyn Ford at cwantmoore@aol.com or call Carolyn at 540.280.2448 by April 17th and indicate if you need a canoe and if you need a guide.

THE PRESIDENT'S PERCH *Spring Forward?*

It has been 45 years from the first Earth Day and now it has extended into Earth Week in many places including Staunton. As you have read and heard before, the theme this year is *Starry Nights*. Thanks to Darrell who has coordinated three of the many great programs.

First is "How Fast, How Far, How Big - Stars in the Night Sky" at the Frontier Culture Museum and led by the Shenandoah Valley Star Gazers on April 14th. The second program on April 16th, "What's Happening to Our Bats?: The Biology and Conservation of the Furry Night Fliers" also at the Frontier



Culture Museum. The third program "Owls: Birds of Mystery and Majesty" with John Spahr will be held at the Staunton Library on April 22nd.

The club is one of many sponsors of Wild Virginia's Wild and Scenic Film Festival which is held in two locations, Charlottesville on April 11 and BRCC on April 18th with each venue having different films. Wild Virginia's website says:

"The Wild and Scenic Film Festival brings together a selection of films that tell stories about our planet, our beautiful and precious wildlands, and the people of the communities who love them, play in them and defend them. They open our eyes and hearts to fantastic experiences in remarkable places. They inspire a sense of wonder, beckon us towards action, highlight issues, and provide solutions."

The Festival's films at BRCC will be eight short films with wide ranging topics such as dragonflies in Japan to the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains to protecting a river in the Fijian Highlands and one longer film entitled "Oil & Water" which follows two boys coming of age in the middle of a toxic disaster in the Amazon.

You can find the entire list of local programs with dates and times at the website earthdaystaunton.org. Please come out and support the bird club's programs and all Earth Day events!

Penny Warren, President

WANTED... VOLUNTEERS

We will need some extra hands off and on throughout the VSO Annual Meeting at Wintergreen, May 8-10. More details on specific times and activities will be forthcoming. In the interim, if you know you will be attending and if you can help, please inform Penny Warren (penny@staunton.com).

Thank You!!!!



REPORT FROM THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

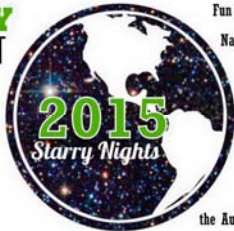
This year continues to be a busy and successful year for community outreach and conservation projects for the Augusta Bird Club. It started with our promotion of the Great Backyard Bird County that involved a community bird walk at the Frontier Culture Museum and a program on 'Beginning Birding' at the Staunton Public Library.

It continues with Committee's active participation on the Earth Day Staunton Committee. ABC organized two programs, one on bat conservation and one on owls, to fit in with the 2015 Earth Day theme of 'Starry Nights.' ABC also organized and partially funded the construction and installation of six nursing bat boxes around public areas in Staunton (see an article in this newsletter). One box is scheduled to be installed at Lee High School at the beginning of a school nature trail. The Conservation Committee is also consulting on the nature trail.

Upcoming community outreach events include the Earth Day Staunton event on April 18 in downtown Staunton, and Kites and Critters on April 19 at Bells Land. ABC will participate in both events (see schedule of events in this newsletter).

**EARTH DAY
STAUNTON**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 18
9:00am - 12 Noon
At the Sunspots Pavilion
(near the Staunton Farmer's Market)
Rain location: Sunspots Studios**



Fun & Educational Children's Activities
Native Plant Sale, Sapling Giveaways
and Natural Gardening Advice
Live Animal Shows by
the Wildlife Center of Virginia
Native Fish Aquarium
Puppet Pandemonium by
the Augusta Co. Library and MUCH more!

Volunteers Needed -- The Conservation Committee currently consists of myself as Chair, Penny as Bluebird Trail monitor, Jo King as VBS county bluebird coordinator, Catherine Kohus as Earth Day display coordinator with Kathy Romig as a helper this year, and Mark Gatewood as ex-officio volunteer extraordinaire. There are opportunities for additional bird-related conservation projects around the community that can be pursued with additional volunteer help for the committee. It would be helpful to have a list of club members the committee can contact when volunteer help is needed for a potential conservation project.

If conservation and outreach projects in the community are of interest to you, please let the Conservation Committee know. Additional volunteers can help, for example, at the ABC display at Earth Day Staunton and at the Kite and Critters event. We would also like to have a co-chair of the committee since I spend my summers and early fall in Michigan and do not plan activities during this

time. Contact information is: Darrell Schwalm, schwalmie2@aol.com, 885-0015.

- Darrell Schwalm, Committee Chair

BIRDNOTE® *Geolocators Reveal Secrets of Landbird Migration*

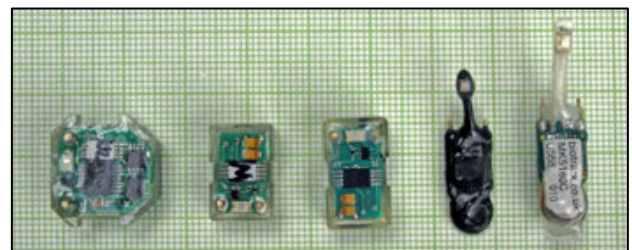
Geolocators are revealing fascinating information about where migrating birds go and how fast they get there. These very light devices can be mounted on the backs of even small birds such as Wood Thrushes. They record sunrise and sunset times. This information, coupled with that from a clock in the geocator, quite precisely marks a bird's latitude and longitude.

Since 2007 geolocators have enabled some startling discoveries.

"The first geocator study of a songbird showed that migration rate, particularly in spring, was much faster than previously estimated..." Some Purple Martins, traveled from South America to the Northern United States at a rate between three and four hundred miles a day. Previous estimates for the pace of spring migration in songbirds were 30 to 90 miles a day. The tracking devices also show that migration in spring is significantly faster than in fall.

Geolocators also identify migratory bottlenecks. For example, many Wood Thrushes return to the U.S. in spring through a very narrow span of coastline in Louisiana, showing the importance of this site for the conservation of this declining species.

*Written by Todd Peterson
Producer: John Kessler
Executive Producer: Chris Peterson*



OUT WITH THE OLD IN WITH THE NEW

The Bluebirds and Tree Swallows on Bell's Lane will be treated to new birdhouses when they start nesting this spring. Thanks to our president, Penny,



and a grant from the Virginia Bluebird Society (VBS), the Augusta Bird Club received 16 new bird boxes to replace the old boxes. And the 'old boxes' were indeed old, having been refurbished about three years ago from even older boxes that Jo King stored on her back porch. Jo is the VBS bluebird monitoring coordinator for Augusta County.

End of story? Not quite yet. Isn't there an old adage about 'no good deed goes unpunished? Well, it was a simple plan -- she would get the boxes and I would install them. Penny got the grant, contacted an official VBS bird box builder in Crozet, and was notified when the boxes were ready in early February. The first impediment was the weather and the snow covered ground. No sense picking up 16 boxes when you can't install them.

When mid-March came and we picked-up the boxes (thanks to my wife Jane), we discovered the second impediment. There were no Noel Guards on the boxes. Penny tried to find a place to buy the guards, but to no avail. She then turned to me knowing I had made guards for 10 birdhouses ABC had installed at the Frontier Culture Museum in 2014. I told her that making 16 Noel guards will be a very time-consuming process and that I needed help. But, who do you turn to for help with bird club conservation projects -- Ghost Busters???



Instead, Penny asked her son, Nick, and between Nick and I, we got the job done. We were then joined by club member Mark Gatewood, and spent part of an afternoon installing the boxes

on Bell's Lane. Job complete, birds happy, and a big thank you to Nick and Mark!!

But will the birds be happy? When I returned to remove the old boxes, the wind was blowing. I noticed that the boxes swayed a little in the wind, and the wobbling baffles clanged as they hit against the poles. I hope that Penny can report back in the fall that this was a successful nesting year for Bluebirds, and maybe that the fledglings learned how to dance to the beat.

- Darrell Schwalm, Conservation Chair

2015 EARTH DAY STAUNTON PROGRAMS

The theme this year for Earth Day Staunton is 'starry nights.' There are a number of events scheduled that will extend the observance of Earth Day from the end of March through the later part of April. These events have to do with programs on night light pollution, stargazing, bats, and owls. Support for these programs by ABC members is most welcomed. The contact for additional information is our Earth Day Committee Representative, Darrell Schwalm, at 885-0015.

March 26 , Mary Baldwin College -- Shanil Varina will present a program on Starry Night for the Shenandoah Valley Stargazer Club.

Wednesday, April 8, Staunton Public Library, 7 pm -- The film, The City Dark, will be shown.

Tuesday, April 14. Frontier Culture Museum, 7 pm -- Stars in the Night Sky program and telescope viewing by the Shenandoah Valley Stargazer Club.

Thursday, April 16, Frontier Culture Museum, 7 pm -- Rick Reynolds, Biologist, VADGIF will provide a presentation on "What's Happening to Our Bats?: The biology and conservation of our furry night fliers." Learn about these mysterious night-fliers, the 'White-Nose Syndrome' that is killing large numbers of bats, and how to build bat house to help these important animals of our 'Starry Nights.'

Saturday, April 18, Downtown Staunton on Byers St. and Sunspots Pavilion -- Earth Day Staunton exhibits and entertainment.

Saturday, April 18, 1-5 pm -- Self-guided Solar Home Tour, Staunton and Augusta County sponsored by Solarize Augusta.

-Brenda Tekin

Saturday, April 18 , Blue Ridge Community College, 7 pm -- Wild Virginia's Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival.

Sunday, April 19, Bells Lane, 1-5 pm -- Kites and Critters family event sponsored by Valley Conservation Council.

Thursday, April 23, Montgomery Hall Park 7:30 pm -- Presentation by John Sparh on Owls: Birds of Mystery and Majesty sponsored by the ABC.

Raptorthon

Dear friends,

This year team "Fly Like An Eagle" (me, Gabriel Mapel and Penny Warren) will be conducting our 3rd annual RAPTORTHON to be held on May 3. The purpose is to have fun and to raise money to support HMANA's and hawkwatchers' work for raptors and hawkwatching throughout the Americas. We will spend the whole day birding Highland County. Half of the proceeds we raise go to HMANA and half stay with our local Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch to help fund the annual "Where the Raptors Soar: A Day at a Hawk Watch" and educational materials. We hope that you will consider sponsoring our team by simply using the link below and click on team Fly Like An Eagle (Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch) to submit an online donation.

<http://www.hmana.org/raptorthon/#Sponsor>

We'd really appreciate your help! The results of our Raptorthon will be provided to all sponsors!



Thank You for your support!

DATES TO REMEMBER

Mark Your Calendar

April 18

Earth Day

April 19

Kites and Critters (rain date 4/26)

May 2

Riverfest

May 8-10

VSO Annual Meeting

May 16

Annual Club Birding & Brunch
Natural Chimneys Park, 8:00 a.m.

BATS IN THE BELFRY?

By Darrell Schwalm, Conservation Committee Chair

No bats in the belfry, rather, bats in Staunton -- more precisely, bat houses in Staunton. Staunton has always been friendly to Shakespeare, to business, to tourist, to blue birds, and now its friendly to BATS!

The **August Bird Club** partnered with the **Earth Day Staunton Committee** to install five bat houses at locations in Staunton and one in neighboring Verona. The project was initiated by ABC Conservation Committee as a community outreach and education initiative in support the **2015 Earth Day Staunton** theme of "Starry Nights."

The Augusta Bird Club, the Earth Day Staunton Committee, and Lowe's of Staunton provided funding and materials. Lowe's donated the 16 foot 4"x4" posts valued at over \$100.



The bat boxes are large, with three chambers designed for nursing females and their young. Each house can hold over 100 bats. The houses are constructed to provide the warmth needed for the



young bats including a black coat of paint to absorb the sunlight. The houses are installed in open locations of direct sunlight for at least eight hours, and are oriented in a SE direction.

Bat Box Locations -- Want to see one or all of the bat boxes? The locations are as follows:

- Two boxes at the Frontier Culture Museum in the field by the blue bird trail on the entrance road from Rt. 250. One is near the pond and the second is at the I-81 end of the field.
- One box is on the Mary Baldwin College campus down the hill from the president's house, at the edge of the natural grasses and wild flower patch, and near the blue bird boxes installed by ABC.
- One at Lee High School at a back corner of the lower athletic fields.
- One at the athletic fields of Stuart Hall School located along Commerce Rd/Rt. 11.
- The final box can be found at the Project Grows garden farm on Seawright Spring Rd. west of Verona.

The ABC Conservation Committee volunteers who constructed and installed the houses are Darrell Schwalm, Mark Gatewood and Stu McDaniel with the bird club, and Doug May with the Verona United Methodist Church's community outreach project. The Frontier Culture Museum provided their workshop for the construction phase.



White-Nose Syndrome - ABC has undertaken this bat conservation project in support of the Earth Day Staunton's theme of "Starry Skies," and because large numbers of bats are dying in Virginia from a fungal disease called White-Nose Syndrome. The fungus infects the bats during hibernation in caves. Providing nursing boxes for large numbers of nursing females will hopefully help this important species increase in numbers to recover from this disease.

Bat Presentation - A second bat-related activity planned by ABC is a presentation on Thursday, April 16 titled, "What's Happening to Our Bats," by Rick Reynolds, Biologist with the VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in Verona. The presentation is on April 16 at 7 pm at the Frontier Culture Museum's Dairy Barn. Rick will talk about the biology and conservation of our important, furry night fliers.

Bat Box Display - ABC will also include an example of the bat box and instructions on constructing these houses at their display during Earth Day Staunton in the wharf area of downtown Staunton on Saturday, April 18 from 9 am to noon.

ABC MEETING MINUTES

March 9, 2015

President Penny Warren called the meeting to order at 7:00 meeting in the Covenant Presbyterian Church. She then introduced Susan Klingingworth and Roger Wells new members to the club. Faye Cooper who has announced her retirement as Executive Director of the Valley Conservation Council introduced Bruce Rinker as her replacement. Bruce stated his appreciation to the appointment and stated he is interested in planning a trip to the Galapagos Islands in the year 2016. A number of members raised their hands as being interested.

Members reported seeing lots of Robins along with Pine Siskins at feeders. Allen Lerner reported that the sighting of the Smiths Longspur at the Airport is the first sighting in Virginia. He also stated that the Trumpeter Swan with young seen last year was also a state record.

The events of Earth Day which our club sponsors were listed as follows.

John Spahr will present a program on Owls with the theme Starry Nights.

Darrell Schwalm is building bat houses. Rick Reynolds will make a presentation on the White

Nose syndrome that is killing bats and the JMU astronomer will also make a presentation. These events will occur beginning the end of March through April 23rd.

Penny reminded members of the VSO meeting at Wintergreen that we are co-sponsoring with the Albemarle club the weekend of May 8-10. She asked for volunteers to help with registration on Friday and Saturday. She distributed a signup sheet for volunteers to list their willingness to assist in the activities.

Walt Childs presented nominations for officers for the coming year noting that all of the present officers have agreed to continue to serve as follows:

- President** – Penny Warren
- Vice President** – Peter Nebel
- Secretary** – Grant Simmons
- Treasurer** – Lisa Hamilton
- Bulletin Editor** – Paul Callo

The slate will be voted on at the April meeting.

Penny announced a Field Trip to the Boxerwood Gardens in Lexington March 21st. Allen is planning a visit to Humpback Rocks March 19th at dusk to observe Woodcocks displaying. Elaine Carwile noted that there is a Dismal Swamp birding weekend at the end of April.

Peter Nebel then introduced Justin Folk, a wild-life biologist who presented a program on the habitat for Bob White Quail and what is needed to restore habitat. He noted that there has been an 82% decline of their population since 1967.

His program was most informative regarding the habitat necessary for Bob Whites to survive. After taking questions the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Grant Simmons, Secretary

BIRD QUIZ!

Can you identify this bird?



Happy guessing!

**Last Month: Eurasian Hobby
(*Falco subbuteo*)**

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

TREASURER'S REPORT

2/01/2015 – 2/28/2015

as submitted by Lisa S. Hamilton

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE – 2/01/2015	\$ 5,565.66	
INCOME	\$ 30.99	
EXPENSES	\$ 274.69	
BALANCE – 2/28/2015		\$ 5,321.96
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE – 2/01/2015	\$ 20,111.40	
INCOME	\$ 329.00	
EXPENSES	\$ 0.00	
BALANCE - 2/28/2015		\$20,440.40
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 2/28/2015		\$25,762.36

NEW MEMBERSHIP CHAIR!

Brenda Tekin is our new membership chair. Thank you Brenda for taking on this taking on this very important office for the bird club!

Augusta Bird Club Website
www.augustabirdclub.org