

50 Years of the Bulletin!



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 50, No.5
January 2016

*“At once a voice arose among the bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small in blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul upon the growing gloom.*

~ Thomas Hardy, “The Darkling Thrush”

JANUARY MEETING

Date: Monday, January 11th, 7:00 PM

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

Program: Birds in Watercolor
Speaker: Peg Sheridan



Peg Sheridan has lived in Augusta County for eight years. She is married to a recently retired U.S. Forest Service employee, whom she met when she was a wildlife biologist in Idaho. She gave up her career in 1995 to be home with her children, and started her own art business, called Inspirations, in 1999. Peg has been painting in watercolor for over 36 years, and has been teaching watercolor painting for 16 years. She is a signature member of the Virginia Watercolor Society and has earned many awards for her paintings. She recently became involved in painting *en plein air* or outside, which combines her two loves of art and nature.

Peg is known for her encouraging, “no fear” approach to watercolor painting. She has taught for many art associations, and currently teaches classes at Blue Ridge Community College, Staunton-Augusta Art Center, Beverley Street Studio School,

The Homestead and an arts organization in Woodstock. She is active in many arts organizations in



the area.

For this program, Peg would like to share with you her experience with birds as a biologist, and her love of painting birds. She will do a short demonstration on painting birds in watercolor, and will have some examples of her work for sale.

The pre-meeting dinner will be at Little Maria's, 1555 Commerce Rd (Rt 11), just north of Technology Drive on the east side of the highway. Dinner will be at 5:30pm. Please email or phone Peter Nebel (nebelpk@yahoo.com or 540-942-0946) before noon on the day of the meeting if you are planning to be there.

FIELD TRIPS

Where: Highland County

When: Saturday January 16

Meeting Place & Time: Meet at the Food Lion lower parking lot at 07:30 to carpool.

Coordinator: Allen Larner, birder-gonewild@yahoo.com

Join Allen Larner on this day of adventure over to Highland County to look for Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Black-capped Chickadee plus many more different species of birds. Bring snacks or a lunch. We will stop off at a place and pick up lunches if needed. Dress for the weather; rain or snow will cancel the trip.

For more info contact Allen Larner at birder-gonewild@yahoo.com or call 280-3423

Contact: Allen Larner birdergonewild@yahoo.com

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

~ Christmas Bird Count

For me, I am like a kid waiting for Christmas morning when it comes to the annual Christmas Bird Count. The anticipation with getting up early... 4ish or so to go owling, wondering what will we see, record number birds, record bird sightings, etc. ... all of it is wrapped up in excitement!!! Although not all of the data is in for the 2015 Augusta Christmas Bird Count, e.g. number of hours, mileage, etc., and the Waynesboro count isn't until the first weekend in January, we do have the basic Augusta information showing a total of 77 species and five additional species for the count week. One of the count week species was a tragic statistic and that being our one and only Fox Sparrow was a window strike at one of my friend's house! not something I look forward to hearing!



I always look at YuLee's handwritten records for a quick comparison of Allen's list of birds and

YuLee's data to see high and low numbers as well as species seen and not seen in any given year. As I was going through the list, one record jumped out at me ... 255 Evening Grosbeaks on Dec. 31, 1977!!



The grosbeaks piqued my interest and with a little research on line I found an interesting article from BirdSource that provides CBC data showing changes in EVGR numbers between 1960 and 1998 along with an animated map of distribution between 1988 and 1998. Several speculations or possibilities about the decline were noted. EVGRs may not be moving as far south during winter due to warmer temperatures. Second, decline of food availability due to changes in Canadian forestry practices and lastly, numbers in the East may be stabilizing in the north woods east of the Great Lakes. EVGRs did not occur east of the Great Lakes prior to late nineteenth century.

All I know or can imagine is what an exciting CBC that must have been in 1977! As always ... something new and/or old grabs my attention and leaves me waiting with great enthusiasm for the next CBC. However, in the interim, we have the annual 'Great Backy' to anticipate. Dates for this event are February 12-15th ... more on that later!

Happy New Year and see you soon!

Penny Warren
President

TIME FOR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Dear ABC members,

This is a reminder that it's time to renew your Augusta Bird Club membership for 2015-16.

If you have already renewed, thank you! If you still need to renew, please mail your dues to me along with the completed form or feel free to turn in your payment at the next Club meeting.

Checks should be made out to 'AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB.' Note that any amount contributed over regular dues may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution during the calendar year in which it is paid (see website for further details at <http://www.augustabirdclub.org/>).

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Happy New Year!!

Sincerely,

Brenda Walters
Membership Chair
219 Williams St.
Staunton, VA 24401
202-997-3185



ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH 2015 Season Summary

2015 marked the 40th season for Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch. In total, 13,819 migrating raptors were counted, which is a little lower than our average number of 16,535. Our season spans Aug 15-Nov 30, and we were able to have good coverage this year (623 total hours).

We did not record any rare migrants this season such as Mississippi Kite, Rough-legged Hawk or Swainson's Hawk. However, this season's Bald Eagle count of 246 was second only to last year's 280 (season avg = 61)! We had 22 **Golden Eagles**, tied with 2013 for the second-most in a season (season avg = 8 and season high of 40 in 2014).

The falcons put on a good show this season. We had 48 **Merlin**, breaking the previous season record of 46 last year (season avg = 15). The last Merlin of this season was recorded on November 27, which is a record late season migrant (previous late date was 11/24). We had 40 **Peregrine Falcon**, the third highest season count on record (season avg = 19) and 187 **American Kestrels**, which is a little above the season average of 142.



We recorded 213 **Osprey** (season avg = 177) and 76 **Northern Harrier** (season avg = 69).

The buteos gave a mixed bag of results this year. The 63 **Red-shouldered Hawks** was above the season average of 41. The number of **Broad-winged Hawks** totaled 10,497, which is a little below the season average of 13,469. Right on schedule, the peak Broad-wing flight occurred on September 18-19 with 3,142 and 3,015 counted, respectively. The **Red-tailed Hawks** numbered 609 this season, which was also below the average of 892.

The accipiter numbers were a little above average this season with 6 **Northern Goshawks** (season avg = 4), 249 **Cooper's Hawks** (season avg = 175), and 1,497 **Sharp-shinned Hawks** (season avg = 1,384).

In addition to being on a raptor migration flyway, Rockfish Gap is a great spot to observe other avian migrants, and this year we ended with a total of 114 different species (raptors and non-raptors). Highlights are described here. A total of 234 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrated through Rockfish Gap this fall. The warblers put on a good show this fall with 23 species recorded (Ovenbird, Golden-winged, Black-and-white, Tennessee, Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded, American Redstart, Cape May, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Blackburnian, Yellow, Blackpoll, Black-throated Blue, Palm, Pine, Yellow-rumped, Prairie, Black-throated Green, Wilson's, and Yellow-breasted Chat). The sparrows also made a good showing with 9 species (Chipping, Field, Fox, Dark-eyed Junco, White-crowned, White-throated, Savannah, Song, and Eastern Towhee).

Other notable total season numbers of migrants include: 95 Common Loons, 448 Double-crested Cormorant, 45 Ring-billed Gull, 22 Common Nighthawk, 3,326 Chimney Swifts, 85 Red-headed Woodpeckers, 38 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 8 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 208 Northern Flickers, 4,031 Blue Jays, 526 Fish Crows, 257 Common Ravens (although we can't be sure all of these were indeed migrating), 366 Tree Swallows, 240 Barn Swallows, 4,687 American Robins, 8,003 Cedar Waxwings, 54 Indigo Buntings, 2,340 Red-winged Blackbirds, 5,482 Common Grackles, 7 Purple Finches, 38 Pine Siskins, and 357 American Goldfinches. A few uncommon migrants included: Gadwall, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Lesser Scaup, Herring Gull, Philadelphia Vireo, Horned Lark, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Red-breasted Nuthatch, American Pipit, and Rusty Blackbird.



For the second year in a row, we had several sightings of a leucistic Turkey Vulture, although this year's bird had a lot more light feathers (likely a different individual). Also, another continuing story this year has been the 'Corvid Food Story', which included sightings such as: crows carrying chunks of kettle corn, a Raven pair with one carrying a slice of bread and the other a piece of bologna, another

pair of Ravens the next day with one carrying a slice of bread and the other an unknown reddish colored food item, a Raven carrying two French fries at the same time, a Raven carrying a hotdog wiener and a few hours later another carrying half a hotdog bun, a Raven carrying an onion ring and then another carrying an onion ring the following day, and a Raven carrying a hotdog in bun.

It was great to see lots of Monarch Butterflies again this year, and although there weren't quite as many Monarchs as last year, this season's total of 882 is much better than several of the other recent years! Our highest single-day count was 106 on 9/16.

See you next fall and keep looking up!

- RGHW Coordinators & Counters: Brenda Tekin and Vic Laubach

- RGHW Counters: Rose Thomas, Gabriel Mapel, David Hunter, and Jenn Detweiler

NEW EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Hello fellow local bird-lovers,

It's a pleasure to assume the title of editor for the ABA newsletter and I hope I will be able to approach the excellent record that Paul Callo has left. As an initial intro to some of my personal and professional interests I thought I'd append a [link to an article](#) I wrote last fall for *Mongabay* concerning Africa's plummeting vulture populations, the victims of poachers, traffickers and both intentional and accidental poisoning. Hope you enjoy it, and I'll look forward to seeing you soon.

Best regards,

--Bill--

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

EARTH DAY 2016
Saturday, April 16th
9 A.M. - noon

Sunspots Studios, downtown Staunton

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MEETING MINUTES

November 9, 2015
7:00 pm

The meeting convened at Covenant Presbyterian Church. President Penny Warren called the meeting to order and then introduced guest Jo Thompson.

She asked for bird sightings and Allen Lerner reported Crested Cormorants, buffleheads and Bonaparte's Gulls along with a Snow Goose. One member reported viewing a Golden Eagle flying over her yard.

Jo King announced a field trip to McCormick's Mill on Wednesday.

Penny shared about a walk to Montgomery Park on Monday the 15th meeting at 8:30 at the Picnic shelter at 8:30.

Brenda Walters stated it is time to pay dues for the coming year and she has sent out emails reminding members of that fact.

Grant Simmons reported on the annual Bird Seed Sale stating it was a success with \$2,170.22 in profits. He also shared there are extra seeds and bird feeders available for sale. Contact him if interested at 337-0471.

Linda Matkins announced our December meeting will be a Pot Luck dinner with the club providing the meat for December 14th at 6:30 pm.

Allen reminded members that the Augusta County Christmas Count will be held December 19th with the tally dinner at Springdale Gardens hosted by Tish Folsom.

Peter Nebel introduced Ed Lawler who shared pictures and comment on his birding trip to Chile and Argentina focusing on Patagonia. Introducing his pictures was his albino hummingbird trademark.

Following questions and remarks the meeting adjourned.

Submitted by
Grant Simmons, Secretary

Treasurer's Report submitted by Lisa Hamilton 11/01/2015 – 11/30/2015

REGULAR OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE – 11/01/2015	\$6,217.95	
INCOME	\$445.90	
EXPENSES	\$0.00	
BALANCE – 11/30/2016		\$6,663.85
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE – 11/01/2015	\$18,166.13	
INCOME	\$347.00	
EXPENSES	\$0.00	
BALANCE - 11/30/2015		\$18,513.13
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 11/30/2015		\$25,176.98

BIRD QUIZ!

Can you identify this bird?



The answer will be revealed next month.
Happy guessing!

~
Last Month:
Silvery-fronted Tapaculo
(*Scytalopus argentifrons*)

Virginia Society of Ornithology
www.virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club
www.augustabirdclub.org