



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 54, No. 4
December 2019

" No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings. "

~ William Blake

HOLIDAY PARTY!!

DECEMBER 16th, 6:00 PM

(NOTE: The meeting date has been moved to the third Monday of the month.)

Come join your Augusta Bird Club friends for our annual holiday party. The bird club will provide ham, turkey, and drinks. Please bring a side dish, bread, or dessert to share. Following the meal, we will have the Christmas Bird Count tally and door prizes.

Hope to see you there!



**The holiday party two years ago:
December 18th, 2017.**

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT(S)

Saturday, December 14th: Augusta County CBC

This count circle is centered in Verona, and includes the immediate vicinity of Staunton as well as areas to the northwest and northeast of the city. All areas are already being covered, but any last-minute volunteers may contact one of these leaders:

Vic Laubach
Jo King
Stan Heatwole
Elaine Carwile or Nancy Lawler
Peter Nebel
Andrew Clem

The tally will be done after the Club's annual Christmas dinner on Monday December 16th.

January 5th, 2020: Waynesboro CBC

By January 5, all the presents will have been opened, many of the holiday season's special treats will be long gone, and we will have rung in the new year. But there is still something wonderful to look forward to: the Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which spans the Blue Ridge to cover territory in the Shenandoah Valley/western Augusta County as well as Afton and parts of Rockfish Valley to the east. It's the perfect opportunity to get out in the field with like-minded companions and get your year list off to a good start.

We also need feeder watchers. If you live within 7.5 miles or so of the village of Sherando (intersection of Rt. 664 and Rt. 610) and can count the birds on your property, check with Crista to find out if you're within the count circle.

There will be a free tally supper that evening with main dish provided; participants are asked to bring a side dish or dessert. Details will be provided to count participants.

If you'd like to participate, please contact Crista Cabe at cristacabe@gmail.com or 540-688-8149 by December 15 if possible so that territories and teams can be assigned.

ROCKFISH GAP HAWK WATCH 2019 SEASON SUMMARY

The 2019 fall migration count at Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch recorded a total of 28,938 raptors between August 15 and November 30, which is a little more than our 10-year average of 26,612. Our volunteer counters put in 522 total hours (10-year avg = 565) of effort between those dates. This year we were challenged with weather that was not very conducive to good raptor flights (e.g. fewer days with W or NW winds). We had 16 days not counted due to poor weather (rain and/or fog) and only 4 days that were uncovered due to lack of volunteer counters. Thus, we had 88 days out of 108 total (81%) that were covered.



Red-tailed Hawk; photos courtesy of Vic Laubach.

Overall it was a pretty good season, even though most of our raptor species numbers were below average, and no records were set this year. Among our larger common migrants, we had 264 BALD EAGLE (10-year avg = 250), 206 OSPREY (avg = 262), while our NORTHERN HARRIER count of 31 was less than half of our average of 66. Among the

accipiters, we had 1,161 SHARP-SHINNED HAWK (avg = 1,765) and 194 COOPER'S HAWK (avg = 307). Of the buteos, our RED-TAILED HAWK count of 677 was not too bad (avg = 744), while the RED-SHOULDERED HAWK count of 65 was noticeably low (avg = 86). On two occasions, a rare dark morph Red-tailed Hawk was observed (Sep. 10 and Oct. 25). Our BROAD-WINGED HAWK count of 26,058 was very healthy and above average (avg = 22,747), of which 19,245 passed through over a 2-day period (Sep. 17-18). All of our falcons were below average, with 141 AMERICAN KESTREL (avg = 218), 33 MERLIN (avg = 41), and 29 PEREGRINE FALCON (avg = 35).



Golden Eagle being harassed by Ravens.

Among our uncommon raptors, our NORTHERN GOSHAWK count of 3 was somewhat low (avg = 7), and our GOLDEN EAGLE count of 11 was only half of our average of 20. The MISSISSIPPI KITE season count of 7 (2 adult and 5 immature) was high again this year (avg = 3). We were very lucky to have observed not one but *two* SWAINSON'S HAWKS (an adult light morph on Nov. 1 and a juvenile light morph on Nov. 29). These were only the 7th and 8th Swainson's on record at Rockfish Gap. Finally, we were also fortunate to have observed a light morph adult female ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK on Nov. 28 (our 11th on record).

In terms of less-common migrating non-raptor species, 68 Snow Goose, 17 Common Loon, 181 Double-crested Cormorant, 69 Tundra Swan were observed. We also had 141 Red-headed Woodpecker, 19 species of migrating warblers, 215 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, 229 Common Nighthawk, 2,140 Cedar Waxwing, and 17 Rusty Blackbird. Finally, we were happy to see that our

Monarch Butterfly migration comprised a healthy count of 1,660.

I'd like to thank the following volunteer counters who contributed this season: Brenda Tekin, Rose Thomas, Ezra Staengl, Dave Hunter, Baxter Beamer, John Spahr, John Rowlett, Dave Fischer, Gabriel Mapel, and Ira Lianez. We thank all the visitors who came up to witness this great migration with us. Finally, we thank all those who helped support our hawk watch with your generous donations!

Vic Laubach
Coordinator, Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

On Friday, November 15, five Augusta Bird Club members went for a sunny but brisk bird walk at the Trails at Mill Place. Highlights were Killdeer, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, Kingfisher, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, as well as White-throated, Song, and at least two Swamp Sparrows. As we were departing, there were two Wild Turkeys in the field across the road.

Three of us then stopped at the Hardee's pond where we had Hooded Mergansers (four), Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-crowned, White-throated, and Song Sparrows. Finally, we went to Bell's Lane where we added another sparrow to the day, Field Sparrow, and the highlight of the morning ... a "Gray Ghost" Northern Harrier! We had long, but distant, looks at him. In sum, it was a beautiful morning with 28 species total. Thanks to those who participated!

by Penny Warren



Swamp Sparrow at Mill Place trail, November 15.

Saturday, November 23rd was chilly and overcast, but six club members and friends braved the conditions on a vigorous and enjoyable hike along the Chimney Hollow trail in western Augusta County. Highlights were multiple Winter Wrens, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Golden-crowned Kinglets. We also had brief glimpses of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and a Pileated Woodpecker. Altogether, we tallied a total of 16 species of birds for the day. Thanks to Dan Perkuchin for tabulating our observations, and to all those who participated.

by Andrew Clem



Winter Wren at Braley Pond, November 10.

CONSERVATION CORNER

Did you know that rainfall and snowmelt from suburban lawns, golf courses, and paved surfaces carry pollutants that flow into our lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and ground waters? Of course, you do! We all understand that roads, parking lots, sidewalks, homes, and offices have replaced natural landscapes. As natural landscapes are converted to impervious surfaces, rainfall that once soaked into vegetated ground now becomes stormwater runoff that flows directly into waterways. Stormwater carries pollutants including chemicals, sediment and nutrients to vulnerable streams and rivers. Our storm drains collect stormwater, but do not provide any sort of water filtration.

This problem is being addressed by the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). VCAP is a cost-share program that provides financial

incentives, and both technical and educational assistance to property owners seeking to improve water quality by reducing runoff from roofs, driveways, and impermeable soils. VCAP targets problems including erosion, poor drainage, excessive runoff, and invasive vegetation.

VCAP is budgeted at just over 1 million dollars in 2019, and funding can be used for conservation landscaping, impervious surface removal, permeable pavement installation, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting, green roofs and similar projects. Reimbursement for most projects is set at 75% with a maximum of \$3,500 per application. For more information Staunton, Waynesboro and Augusta County residents can contact Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, 70 Dick Huff Lane, Verona, Virginia 24482, (540) 248-0148, and on the web at: <http://headwatersswcd.org>

by Peter Van Acker



Adult male Northern Harrier on Bell's Lane, December 8.

2019-2020 SCIENCE TALKS: THE SOUTH RIVER – TRANSFORMATION TO SUSTAINABILITY

Science Talks are presented through a partnership between The Virginia Museum of Natural History, the Center for Coldwaters Restoration and the Wayne Theatre in Waynesboro. All programs start at 7:00 PM at the Wayne Theatre.

January 14, 2020: "Sustainable Habitat for Bees and Other Pollinators" with Kal Ivanov, Curator for

Invertebrate Zoology at Virginia Museum of Natural History.

February 11, 2020: "Protecting and Restoring the Cowbane Prairie Wetland Reserve" with Tyler Urgo, Shenandoah Valley Region Steward, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation.

March 17, 2020: "Stream Restoration in the Shenandoah Valley" with Brock Reggi, a stream restoration specialist with the VA Department of Environmental Quality.

April 14, 2020: "Economic Benefits of Sustainability", Speaker TBA.

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

November 11, 2019

The meeting was called to order by board member Ann Cline.

We welcomed visitors Doug and Sally Ruby, and Rosemary Ferguson.

Recent sightings: Braley's Pond produced a Winter Wren and Fox Sparrows. Three Sandhill Cranes flew over the Shields golf course in Fishersville.

Bird Seed Sale: The sale went smoothly thanks to coordinators Crista Cabe, Lisa Hamilton, Linda Matkins, and many volunteers. Gross sales were \$13,200. Net results were \$3,600. We received donations for Nature Camp, the Conservation Fund, and had membership renewals.

Christmas Bird Counts: The Augusta County Christmas Bird Count will take place on 12/14/19. Allen Lerner is coordinating. The Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count will take place Sunday, January 5, 2020 with Crista Cabe coordinating. More volunteers are welcomed.

December dinner/meeting: The ABC will have the annual holiday potluck dinner/meeting on the third Monday, December 16 at Covenant Presbyterian Church beginning at 6:00 pm. Meat and drinks are provided by the club. Please bring your favorite holiday dishes to share. The tally of the Augusta County Christmas Bird Count will take place during the evening.

Field trips: Penny Warren will lead a walk on 11/15 to Mill Place. Andrew Clem will lead a trip to Chimney Hollow on 11/23.

Program: Stan Heatwole introduced our speaker for the evening. Baxter Beamer regaled us with pictures and commentary about his 10-day birding adventure in and around Camp Chiricahua, Arizona during July 2019.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:04 pm.

**Submitted by Marilyn Nash,
Secretary**



Red-winged Blackbird, Indigo Bunting, and American Robin, last August; courtesy of Ann Cline.

RENEW YOUR AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP!

It is time for membership renewal. If you did not renew membership to ABC when you placed your seed order, please do so soon. You can use the form attached at the end of the November bulletin.

Send the form and your dues to:

Martha Gibbons
305 Baldwin Drive
Staunton 24401

Thanks!

HELP WANTED

The office of President is STILL vacant!!
Members who are interested in serving the Augusta Bird Club in this vital function are strongly urged to speak up at the next meeting!

TREASURER'S REPORT

submitted by Lisa Hamilton
10/01/2019 – 10/31/2019

OPERATING FUND		
BALANCE - 10/01/2019	\$ 7,169.02	
INCOME	\$ 657.94	
EXPENSES	\$ 51.20	
BALANCE -10/31/2019		\$7,775.76
EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND		
BALANCE - 10/01/2019	\$13,896.15	
INCOME	\$13,489.83	
EXPENSES	\$ 9,419.80	
BALANCE - 10/31/2019		\$17,966.18
TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 10/31/2019		\$25,741.94

BIRD QUIZ!

Oops! No more room.

Last month: Black-bellied Plover

We have a winner: Lisa Hamilton!

Virginia Society of Ornithology
www.virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club
www.augustabirdclub.org

(Check our website for updates on field trips that have been added, cancelled, or postponed.)