



THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 54, No. 8
April 2020

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit."

~ Psalm 34: 18

APRIL MEETING: CANCELED

Because of the Covid-19/Coronavirus emergency, the Augusta Bird Club meeting scheduled for April 13 has been canceled.

As a result of the emergency, virtually all public gatherings over the next several weeks across the United States have been canceled or postponed. Of particular concern to Augusta Bird Club members, Earth Day, the annual Bell's Lane cleanup, Kites 'n Kritters, Riverfest, Big Spring Day, and the VSO annual meeting have all been canceled.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS: NONE

After consultations among the ABC board members, field trips are canceled until further notice; NO annual summer field trip to Highland County. Governor Northam has issued a broad "[stay-at-home](#)" order, with few exceptions, and we urge members to respect the order and observe "social distancing" rules. Lives are at stake. The annual ABC picnic which is tentatively scheduled for June 6 at the Humpback Rocks Picnic Area is also on hold.

RAPTORTHON! 2020

On May 7, Vic Laubach, Gabriel Mapel, Baxter Beamer and Ezra Staengl will be conducting our 8th annual Raptorthon to raise money to support our local Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch and HMANA. This year, due to the coronavirus, our team members will be birding solo rather than together; each taking a different county. Please consider sponsoring our team's efforts. To donate online simply visit:

<https://www.hmana.org/raptorthon/>

and click on our team. To donate by mail, write your check to 'HMANA' and mail it to Vic Laubach, 104 Lanchester Ct, Waynesboro, VA 22980. We'd greatly appreciate your support! (For more information, see the [ABC website](#).)

Wish us luck!

Vic, Gabriel, Baxter, and Ezra

ABC ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Here is the slate of candidates who were nominated at the March meeting:

Jack Holt, President
Stanley Heatwole, Vice President
Marilyn Nash, Secretary
Lisa Hamilton, Treasurer
Andrew Clem, Editor

Our by-laws require that officers be "elected at the Annual Meeting held in April." Since an in-person election is impossible, the slate of candidates will be considered elected by acclamation unless I receive an objection from any ABC member in good standing. If a member in good standing does raise an objection, by notifying me or another board member prior to April 13, our slate of officers will serve in a provisional capacity. In either case, we will have a formal vote at our first fall meeting, now scheduled for September 14, 2020.

by Peter Van Acker

RARE BIRD PAYS A VISIT: SCOTT'S ORIOLE

Augusta County was visited by a very rare bird this winter. A homeowner near Swoope noticed an

unusual bird in her yard on February 14 and sent photos of it to Michael Godfrey, who forwarded the photos to me and others. We identified the bird as an immature male Scott's Oriole, the first state record of this species in Virginia! The bird stayed at the property until March 23.

Scott's Orioles nest in the southwest United States and typically winter in Central America. This is not the first time we have had western rare birds spend the winter in Augusta County or elsewhere in Virginia. For example, Rufous Hummingbirds and Western Tanagers are considered "rare but regular" during winter in eastern North America. The Scott's Oriole is considerably rarer than the other species, with only a small scattering of records in eastern North America. Interestingly enough, there seemed to be more of them than usual this winter. Florida, Georgia, and Arkansas have also each had one Scott's Oriole this winter.

While the Scott's Oriole was in Swoope it was seen by over 90 birders from around the state. These birders were all specifically invited to come see the bird, and I arranged carpooling and took each group to see the bird. This was at the request of the homeowner who was very concerned about her privacy. There were no posts about the bird online while it was there, and the homeowner's address was never made public. Hosting the bird ended up being a very positive experience for the homeowner, and for many birders as well. The next time a rare bird shows up I hope that we can be as respectful of the homeowner as we were this time. It's the best way to ensure everything goes well for everyone.

by Gabriel Mapel



Scott's Oriole (first-year male), in Swoope on March 1.



Margaret Carbajal (L) and Haley Campbell (R)

MEET OUR 2020 NATURE CAMP SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS: MARGARET CARBAJAL AND HALEY CAMPBELL

The Augusta Bird Club has again awarded two full scholarships and four partial scholarships to Nature Camp in Vesuvius, Virginia. The YuLee Lerner Scholarship, in honor of our long-time club president is awarded to Margaret Carbajal. The Dr. John Mehner Scholarship, in honor of Mary Baldwin biology professor and founder of the Augusta Bird Club is awarded to Haley Campbell. Here are our full scholarship recipients in their own words.

I am Margaret Carbajal, a 10th grader at Staunton High School. I have attended Nature Camp for four years and am looking forward to my fifth year in June 2020. One of my favorite memories was from last year, when I was tasked with carrying an egg all the way up McClung Mountain without breaking it. Up the mountain went smoothly, but on the way down it began to pour. I had to navigate a very muddy downward descent, roaring creeks, and slippery rocks, but safely made it to camp with the egg intact. Upon showing it to Danny, the counselor who bestowed the egg upon me in the first place, he grabbed the egg and smashed it on the kitchen floor.

My name is Haley Campbell and I'm a junior at Wilson Memorial High School. I have attended Nature Camp for five years thanks to the scholarship provided by the Augusta Bird Club, without which I wouldn't be able to

go. Nature Camp has become an important part of who I am. Throughout the time I've spent there, I've had the wonderful opportunity to make friends, take a break from the constant pressures and distractions of society, and to simply learn about and appreciate the beautiful world we live in. Every year when I return, I'm met with familiar faces as well as new, both from campers and counselors. While it's always daunting at first, I end up having an incredible time and I wouldn't trade it for anything. Nature Camp has allowed me to explore not only the natural world, but also who I am as a person.

In addition to Margaret and Haley, the partial scholarship recipients include: Faith Campbell, Hayden Terry, Tristian Cormier and Jonah Funk. Congratulations to all of our ABC sponsored Nature Campers! And thank you ABC members, seed sale participants and donors; you make a difference in the lives of the next generation of birders, conservationists and nature lovers.

by Peter Van Acker

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

On Wednesday, March 18, ten intrepid birders conducted a field trip to McCormick's Farm in Raphine, Virginia, taking special precautions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thirty one species were recorded altogether. Highlights were a Winter Wren, American Kestrel, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers, along with several Eastern Phoebes and Tree Swallows. Species with especially high counts included Red-winged Blackbirds (29) and American Robins (18).

by Jo King

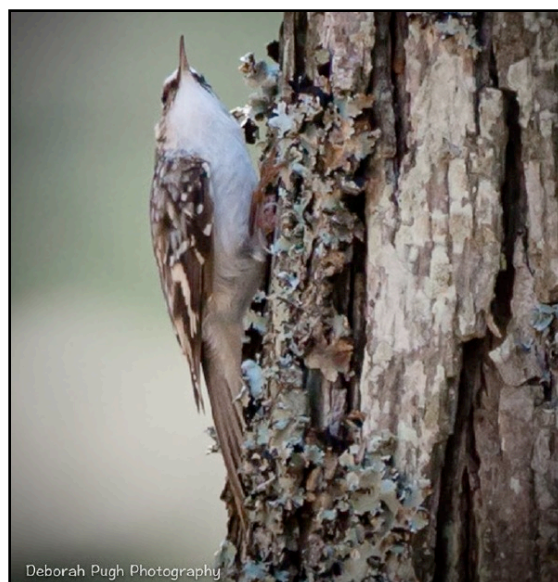
On Saturday, March 28, three members of the Augusta Bird Club went on a field trip to Braley Pond. Each person drove separately, and we adhered to the emergency "social distancing" guidelines. The temperature was mild but skies were overcast with a hint of lingering mist. Right from the start, we heard two early-arriving migratory species singing near the parking area: Pine Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos. Also, two Eastern Phoebes were building a nest under the kiosk. After setting off on the trails, we saw Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers,

Winter Wrens, Belted Kingfishers, and more Pine Warblers and Blue-headed Vireos as we hiked a short way upstream from the pond. We ended the trip with 20 species total, not including the Brown Creeper that Debbie Pugh saw after returning in the afternoon, and not including an early-arriving Louisiana Waterthrush and other birds at two nearby locations. Thanks to Debbie Pugh and Jack Holt for joining me on this excellent day!

by Andrew Clem



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Louisiana Waterthrush*, Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren, Belted Kingfisher, Pine Warbler, and Blue-headed Vireo. *Chimney Hollow; the rest at Braley Pond (March 28.)



Brown Creeper, at Braley Pond (March 28); photo courtesy of Deborah Pugh.

FIELD NOTES SUMMARY

FieldNotes95 — Spring 2019

The following are abridged highlights of spring records, peak counts, and early or late dates, from March through May 2019. They should have been published in the *ABC Bulletin* last year, but have been incorporated into the forthcoming 5th edition of *Birds of Augusta County*.

Cackling Goose (6) – 1 Mar 2019, McCune's Pond, Fishersville: 6th spring record & matches peak count

Mute Swan (1) – 8 May 2019, Stuarts Draft: 6th spring record

Canvasback (35) – 1 Mar 2019, throughout Augusta County: peak count

Common Merganser (13) – 1 Mar 2019, throughout Augusta County: peak count

Ring-billed Gull (111) – 1 Mar 2019, throughout Augusta County: peak count

Least Bittern (1) – 21 May 2019, Shenandoah Wetlands Bank: 4th spring record

Little Blue Heron (1) – 14-16 Apr 2019, Shenandoah Wetlands Bank: 3rd spring record & early spring date

Glossy Ibis (8) – 24-26 Apr 2019, Vance Lane / Rt. 887 Stuarts Draft: 3rd spring record & peak count

Golden Eagle (1) – 29 Apr 2019, Augusta Springs: 5th spring record

Sora (13) – 27 Apr 2019, Shenandoah Wetlands Bank: spring peak count

Spotted Sandpiper (4; 2 adult + 2 fledged young) – 27 May 2019, Smith's Pond, Swoope: early spring breeding record

Eurasian Collared Dove (1) – 30 May 2019, Swoope: 6th spring record; rare spring visitor

Barred Owl (4; 2 adult + 2 fledged young) – 31 May 2019, Augusta Springs: early spring breeding record

Least Flycatcher (1) – 28 May 2019, Blue Ridge Parkway: late spring date

Philadelphia Vireo (5) – 4 May 2019, Blue Ridge Parkway: spring peak count

Marsh Wren (1) – 25 Apr 2019, Shenandoah Wetlands Bank: 5th spring record

FieldNotes98 — Winter 2019–2020

The following are abridged highlights of winter records, peak counts, and early or late dates, December 2019 thru February 2020. They will be incorporated into the book *Birds of Augusta County*.

Trumpeter Swan (1) – 11 Dec 2019 thru 29 Feb 2020, Waynesboro. Bird was here in 2017 & 2018.

Wood Duck (22) – 27 Jan 2020, throughout Augusta County: winter peak count

Common Merganser (30) – 16 Jan 2020, Bell's Lane: winter peak count

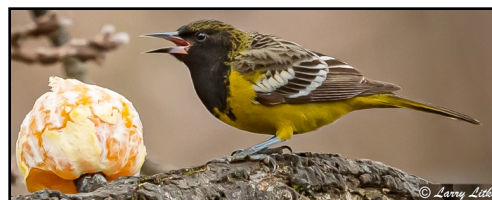
Sandhill Crane (4) – 16 Jan 2020, Stuarts Draft: 4th winter record

Barn Owl (1) – 4 Jan 2020, Guthrie Rd. Fishersville: early breeding record (nest with 2 eggs)

Pileated Woodpecker (27) – 14 Dec 2019, Augusta County CBC: winter peak count

Scott's Oriole (1) – 14-29 Feb 2020, Swoope: first state record, first mountain-valley record, new species to Augusta County, & first winter record (It remained until March 23; see article on pages 1-2.)

Allen Lerner
Augusta Bird Club Records Chair



FIELD NOTES ARCHIVES

<u>When published</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Number</u>
April 2020:	Spring 2019	(# 95)*
October 2019:	Summer 2019	(# 96)*
January 2020:	Fall 2019	(# 97)
April 2020:	Winter 2019–2020	(# 98)
Winter:	December – February	
Spring:	March – May	
Summer:	June – July	
Fall:	August – November	

* **NOTE: FieldNotes95 (Spring 2019) was not published last September as had been planned, and FieldNotes96 (Summer 2019) was mistakenly numbered "95" in the October issue. The previous Field Notes archives were published in April 2019.**

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

March 9, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Crista Cabe, board member.

Guests were welcomed.

Recent Sightings: Brown Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Trumpeter Swan (in Waynesboro), Tree Swallows, Phoebe.

Field trips: Jo King will lead a field trip to McCormick's Mill on 3/18, and Andrew Clem will lead one to Braley Pond on 3/28. Allen Lerner reports that the Shenandoah Wetlands Bank is now open for bird watching as well as the Cowbane Pasture adjoining it.

Nominating Committee: The following are nominated for the board of the ABC 2020/2021 meeting year: President - Jack Holt, VP Stan Heatwole, Secretary - Marilyn Nash, Treasurer - Lisa Hamilton. Committee chairs are: Conservation - Darrell Schwalm, Education - to be determined, Seed Sale - Crista Cabe, Hospitality - Linda Matkins, Field Trips - Jo King and Allen Lerner, Nominating - Penny Warren, Records - Allen Lerner, Membership - Martha Gibbons, Programs - Stan Heatwole, Publicity - Andrew Clem.

Upcoming volunteer opportunities: (1) Earth Day is at Gypsy Hill Park on April 18 from 10:00-2:00 pm. The Augusta Bird Club has a rich history related to Earth Day. Research by John Mehner, one of the club's co-founders, was part of Rachael Carson's inspiration for writing *Silent Spring*. (2) Riverfest in Waynesboro is April 25. **(UPDATE: Both events were canceled due to the covid-19 emergency.)**

Andrew Clem and Allen Lerner have been updating *Birds of Augusta County*, which documents all birds seen in this area. It will be ready soon.

Program: Katie Fallon presented a wonderful program entitled "Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird." We learned that there are 23 species of vultures worldwide with some being critically endangered. Threats include poisoning from lead, strychnine, and carbofuran, electrocution, and belief-based threats which thrive in the black market. Vultures are primarily scavengers and some of their stomach acids can be as strong as battery acid. Their gut flora can neutralize dangerous pathogens such as rabies and botulism. Vultures are extremely important in removing carcasses quickly and

efficiently. Turkey Vultures are the most widespread and abundant with Black Vultures coming in second.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

**Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Nash, Secretary**

BIRD QUIZ!

Can you identify this bird?
(Photographed in Malaysia by Hahn Dung.)



The answer will be revealed in the next issue.
Send your guesses to the editor via e-mail.

~

Mystery bird from the March issue:
Malayan Banded Pitta

We have a winner: Diane Holsinger!

Augusta Bird Club Bulletin
Editor: Andrew Clem, agclem@comcast.net

Augusta Bird Club website:
www.augustabirdclub.org

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

Virginia Society of Ornithology
www.virginiabirds.net