



# THE AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

Vol. 55, No. 7  
March 2021

*"I'll see you again,  
Whenever Spring breaks through again."  
~ Noël Coward, I'll see you again (1929)*

---

## VIRTUAL MARCH MEETING

**Date:** Monday, March 8th, 7:00 PM

**Place:** Online via Zoom (see link below)

**Program:** Listening In: The Acoustic Ecology of Birds

**Speaker:** Dr. Dana Moseley

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85091462987?  
pwd=WIMvd3ArLzdzQ09EUXRweWtjMEpEUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85091462987?pwd=WIMvd3ArLzdzQ09EUXRweWtjMEpEUT09)

Meeting ID: 850 9146 2987      Passcode: 309213

Dr. Moseley will discuss the function of birdsong and how communication is impacted by anthropogenic noise. Human-made noise is low frequency (low pitch) and often overlaps with the lower frequency sounds that birds make, thus masking and impeding communication. Moseley examines how songs have changed through learning and cultural evolution as well as other more immediate mechanisms. She investigates these questions through studies on new world sparrows and Gray Catbirds.

Dr. Dana Moseley is a sensory ecologist who focuses on birdsong and communication through noise. She received her B.S. in Biology from UNC Chapel Hill and her Ph.D. from UMass Amherst in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology. For her dissertation, she studied sexual selection and vocal performance in Swamp

Sparrows (*Melospiza georgiana*) and published results in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, Animal Behaviour, and Scientific Reports (Nature Publishing Group). Moseley conducted two postdoctoral fellowships at William and Mary and then at the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center (SMBC) in which she became interested in the effects of anthropogenic noise on birdsong. At SMBC she began research with the gray catbird across an urban gradient and brought this research program to JMU. In Spring 2018, Moseley started in the Department of Biology at JMU, and has done research with undergraduate and graduate students in the field since then.

---

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIP

**Wednesday, March 17th:** McCormick's Mill Farm  
**Meeting place & time:** At the Mill parking lot by 9:00 AM; no car pooling during the pandemic.  
**Coordinator:** Jo King ... 540-430-0186,  
[kingbird10@yahoo.com](mailto:kingbird10@yahoo.com)

We will be getting ready for Spring by looking for newly-arriving early migrants. If the weather is bad on the 17th, the makeup date will be March 24th.

---

## NEW AUGUSTA COUNTY RECORDS

So far we have added two new birds to our list of birds of Augusta County: Calliope Hummingbird and Say's Phoebe. I believe this raises our total for the county to 320 species. To add to the records, the

Trumpeter Swan (tagged "P61") in Waynesboro has made its third year appearance; it is a rare winter visitor. Also, we have had two different sightings for Sandhill Crane, a Common Yellowthroat in Swoope, two different Rufous Hummingbirds at one home in the Staunton area, the Calliope Hummingbird in the Waynesboro area, a Least Sandpiper in the Mount Solon area. Finally, Greater-white fronted Geese as well as several Cackling Geese have showed up in different areas of the county. With these birds it kept a lot of birders entertained this winter.

by Allen Lerner  
Records Chair



Sandhill Crane, in Fishersville on February 22.  
Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.

---

## AUGUSTA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Augusta CBC was held on Dec. 27, 2020, as 26 members and friends of the Augusta Bird Club took to the field. A total of 93 species of birds were tallied, plus one more during the count week, making it 94. The best birds found were Red-breasted Merganser, Common Loon, Long-eared Owl, Broad-winged hawk, Golden Eagle, Evening Grosbeak, and Rufous Hummingbird. Thank you to all those who took part in this 121st CBC.

by Allen Lerner  
Compiler, Augusta CBC

## WAYNESBORO CBC: A GREAT EFFORT ON A DREARY DAY

Twenty-seven observers in 14 parties ventured forth on January 3 as part of the Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count, and four additional club members contributed records from watching feeders at home. It was a fair-to-middling year in terms of the species count (72) and total number of birds (6,566). Still, there were some remarkable sightings. There were two new species for this count: Elaine Carwile and Ann Cline found a Long-tailed Duck, and Jo King and Bonnie Hughes observed a Common Goldeneye. Ezra Staengl gets the prize for most woodpeckers with 50 sighted, including 25 Downys. Collectively we found record high numbers of three species for this CBC: Northern Harriers (9), Hairy Woodpeckers (16), and Pine Siskins (170). And we had near-high numbers of Winter Wrens (8) and Red-shouldered Hawk (23). But we found no owls at all and missed many other species that we typically find: many kinds of waterfowl, Hermit Thrush, Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe to name a few. We missed being able to gather in the evening to enjoy dinner, relish the good company, and tally results. We're already looking forward to next year! Thanks to everyone who participated.

by Crista Cabe  
Compiler, Waynesboro CBC

---

## OTHER INTERESTING SIGHTINGS



Merlin on Guthrie Rd., in February.  
Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.





**Horned Lark on Guthrie Rd., in February.  
Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.**



**Roseate Spoonbill at Big Branch Marsh NWR,  
Louisiana, February 22.**

---

## **OUTDOOR AND FREE-ROAMING CATS**

It is well documented that the greatest single threat to birds is loss of habitat. In addition, conservation groups are speaking out about the harm done to birds, small mammals and reptiles by outdoor or free-roaming cats. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) estimates that there are 60 to 100 million outdoor or free-roaming cats in the United States, and the American Bird Conservancy estimates that in the United States alone these cats kill 2.4 billion birds(2,400,000,000). Locally, the Wildlife Center of Virginia is speaking out on this issue and has a series of videos on this topic. One video, "The Case for Indoor Cats," can be viewed at

the Wildlife Center's website. (See the third web link at the end of the article.)

There is a move to support programs such as Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR). Many proponents state that TNR reduces the number of and improves the health of free-roaming cat populations. Other studies indicate that TNR program practices, and hence results, are inconsistently applied. To me, a significant consideration is that TNR studies do not address the harm free-roaming cats do to birds, mammals, and reptiles. Here is a comment from a University of Florida study "How Effective and Humane Is Trap-Neuter-Release (TNR) for Feral Cats?" published in March 2020:

"The practice of TNR and the establishment of TNR colonies is neither humane nor proven to be effective at reducing feral cat populations. Our review concurs with another published review that found that TNR colonies do not decrease without high adoption/removal rates, and that these colonies are both a danger to the cats themselves and to nearby humans and wildlife (Longcore et al. 2009). We understand there is no easy solution to the feral cat population problem, but we (the authors) hope more funding is directed towards prevention. Keeping cats indoors and sterilizing them is not cruel and will help to keep these cats safe from disease or injury, allowing them to live longer (see American Bird Conservancy Cats Indoors Campaign)."

As an organization dedicated to "birding, conservation and education", the ABC is developing a position paper on the issue of outdoor or free-roaming cats and we want to know what you think. We understand that cats can make wonderful pets. So, how do we balance our love of birds and the natural world with the 60 to 100 million outdoor or free-roaming cats? If you have any thoughts you would like to share, please send me an email. I hope to hear from you!

**by Peter Van Acker**  
[pjva540@gmail.com](mailto:pjva540@gmail.com)

<https://www.peta.org/issues/animal-companion-issues/overpopulation/feral-cats/>

<https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/>

<https://www.wildlifecenter.org/episode-209-case-indoor-cats>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340388874\\_How\\_Effective\\_and\\_Humane\\_Is\\_Trap-Neuter-Release\\_TNR\\_for\\_Feral\\_Cats](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340388874_How_Effective_and_Humane_Is_Trap-Neuter-Release_TNR_for_Feral_Cats)

NOTE: The final web link above is not a clickable link; readers can copy and paste it into their web browser address bar.

## AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB POSITION PAPER ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

The scientific community identifies global warming as a threat to both people and the planet. The Audubon Society's Executive Director and previous Chief Scientist, Gary Lanham, has called global warming "the greatest threat that birds face today" (The Cap Times, 11/28/2014). The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia states: "While habitat loss is the greatest threat to wildlife biodiversity in Virginia, climate change is also a major threat to wildlife and will increasingly threaten biodiversity unless we substantially decarbonize the energy and transportation sectors."

The Augusta Bird Club (ABC) supports the development of renewable and alternative energy facilities. The ABC encourages localities to identify renewable energy zones as preferred locations for renewable energy facilities, preferably in previously developed land. By establishing renewable energy zones, localities can ease the location approval process and reduce conflict with affected residents, while preserving the rural nature of our area. A piecemeal approach to the location of renewable energy facilities will inherently threaten to wipe out significant tracts of both farmland and natural areas; and it will also damage one of our best climate solutions—nature's own ability to store carbon.

(Approved by the ABC Executive Board, February 7, 2021.)

---

### PRESIDENT'S LETTER: MARCH 2021

Hello, fellow bird lovers! As you might have noticed, the weather has been less than ideal for birding recently. It has been great weather, however, to curl up near the fire and read a good book. So that is my theme for this month — **books**. This is not a book review, per se, but a collection of some interesting sounding titles, all of which are available from your local public libraries. My goal is to remind everyone that the local libraries are a great resource, whether you are doing serious research or just looking for a field guide. If you pay state and local taxes, take advantage of the library system, as you've already paid for it! Here are some titles in the catalog (with authors' names) that sound interesting:

- DVD: John James Audubon (PBS American Masters)
- *Birds and People*, by Mark Cocker
- DVD: Audubon's Video Guide to Birds
- *Genius of Birds and the Bird Way: A New Look At How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think*, by Jennifer Ackerman
- DVD: Secret Life of Birds (BBC)
- *The Most Perfect Thing: Inside (and Outside) a Bird's Egg*, by T. R. Birkhead
- *Feathers: the Evolution of a Natural Miracle*, by Thor Hanson
- *Birds: A Complete Guide to Their Biology and Behavior*, by Jonathan Elphick
- *Birdhouses, Boxes, and Feeders for the Backyard Hobbyist*, by Paul Meisel
- *Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior, and, What It's Like to Be a Bird*, by David Sibley
- *Birdmania: A Remarkable Passion for Birds*, by Bernd Brunner
- *Bird, Egg, Feather, Nest*, by Maryjo Koch

Pique your interest? That's from about 2 of 88 pages in the catalog. Although you cannot go in and browse the shelves, you can reserve books (on-line or by phone) and pick them up curbside. Books at other locations can be sent to your most convenient location. Access the catalog online at [tlcweb.valleylibraries.org](http://tlcweb.valleylibraries.org) Your librarians are there to help you. Why not give them a call?

- Augusta County Library: 540 885-3961
- Staunton Public Library: 540 332-3902
- Waynesboro Public Library: 540 942-6746

by Jack Holt,  
President

---

### ANNUAL ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Our by-laws call for election of officers in April. While it is a bit awkward at the moment, we can easily meet that obligation via our regular Zoom meetings. All our current officers and board members have agreed to continue their service for the next year. I am proposing that we consider them our nominees, though anyone else is welcome to be considered. We will then conduct a vote via Zoom at the April meeting.

**Board Offices:**

President  
 Vice President  
 Secretary  
 Treasurer  
 Bulletin Editor

**Current office holders:**

Jack Holt  
 Stan Heatwole  
 Marilyn Nash  
 Lisa Hamilton  
 Andrew Clem

Also serving on the Board but not subject to election are Past President Peter Van Acker and Board Member At Large Penny Warren. The Augusta Bird Club is interested in hearing from people who are willing to consider filling a position on the Board. If you are interested in serving on the ABC Board, please let one of us know.

by Jack Holt,  
 President

---

## AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

February 8, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 7 pm by President Jack Holt.

Recent Sightings: Say's Phoebe, Golden Eagle, American Pipit, Rusty Blackbirds, Common Goldeneyes, and Least Sandpiper.

ABC Board Meeting February 7th: (1) The budget was discussed and approved. The Conservation and Education Fund allocations were decided for conservation organizations and Nature Camp Scholarships. (2) Peter Van Acker has been working on a formal position for the club to take on renewable energy, which was approved by the board. He is also working on a formal position on free roaming outdoor cats. (3) The club meetings in March and April will continue to be held by Zoom rather than in person due to virus precautions. Consideration is being given to a possible May picnic. (4) Board positions: Jack Holt has agreed to serve as president for another year and Lisa Hamilton will continue as treasurer for another year. Jack will contact other board members to determine their willingness to continue to serve. Assuming they are willing to continue, a nominating committee will not be needed until next year. The Board recommends our board president's position be for one year and we have a "president elect" that will be learning the position and can then assume the presidency the next year. This will allow for a smooth transition each year.

Program: Bruce Ingram, author, high school teacher, conservationist, and native plant advocate shared ideas for making our properties more wildlife friendly. He encourages folks to go all-native in their plantings, get rid of invasive species, create a diversity of habitat, leave dead trees, plant warm season grasses, and plant pollinator plots.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Marilyn Nash, Secretary

---

## TREASURER'S REPORT

submitted by Lisa Hamilton  
 01/01/2021 – 01/31/2021

<b>OPERATING FUND</b>		
BALANCE - 01/01/2021	\$ 7,805.23	
INCOME	\$ 1.99	
EXPENSES	\$ 8.22	
<b>BALANCE - 01/31/2021</b>		<b>\$ 7,799.00</b>
<b>EDUCATION/CONSERVATION FUND</b>		
BALANCE - 01/01/2021	\$22,873.23	
INCOME	\$ 360.00	
EXPENSES	\$ 0.00	
<b>BALANCE - 01/31/2021</b>		<b>\$23,233.23</b>
<b>TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 01/31/2021</b>		<b>\$31,032.23</b>

---

## BIRD QUIZ

Oops! No more room.

Last month: Silver-eared Mesia.

---

Augusta Bird Club Bulletin  
 Editor: Andrew Clem, [agclem@comcast.net](mailto:agclem@comcast.net)

[www.augustabirdclub.org](http://www.augustabirdclub.org)

Virginia Society of Ornithology  
[www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net)