



AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB BULLETIN

April Fools!



Vol. 57, No. 8
April 2023

"Biologists have observed cerulean [warblers] as both victims and perpetrators of 'kleptoparasitism' — birds stealing nesting material from other birds."

~ Katie Fallon, Cerulean Blues (2011)

APRIL MEETING

Date: Monday, April 10th, 7:00 PM

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

Program: Keeping Augusta County Bird
Friendly

Speaker: Sara Hollberg

Pre-meeting dinner: At Little Maria's in Verona (arrive by 5:15 PM). If interested, please contact Vic Laubach (laubach@virginia.edu) before noon that day.

Sara Hollberg is a land use planning consultant with a focus on land conservation and development patterns. She has worked in the Valley region for decades. Sara was a founding member of Valley Conservation Council and wrote Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley to illustrate principles for building thriving communities while preserving natural and cultural resources. Recent work includes visioning for rural communities, preparing for utility scale solar, and succession planning for farm and forest landowners.

Sara has degrees from William and Mary and the University of Virginia and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. She and her husband raised their three children in downtown Staunton and at frequent farm-cations at her family's tree farm near Lynchburg. That bird-rich environment brings fresh

enjoyment each visit. It's woodcock season! Sara's talk will address the policies and trends at the local level that affect birding habitat. She will cover comprehensive plans, discuss emerging topics and programs, and give positive examples of ways to retain natural areas at various scales.



UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, April 8th: Chimney Hollow trail (west on Route 250)

Meeting place & time: Food Lion lower parking lot on N. Coalter St. in Staunton at 8:30 AM.

Coordinator: Andrew Clem, agclem@comcast.com, 540-849-8234

We'll do a two-mile hike in hopes of finding early migrants such as Blue-headed Vireos. Time permitting, we may visit Braley Pond later on. Boots!

Saturday, April 15th: Waverly–Wakefield–Piney Grove, in Sussex County

Meeting place & time: Park & ride parking lot in Waynesboro off of Rt. 340 at 7:00 AM.

Coordinator: Allen Lerner, larnersky@mindspring.com, 540-280-3423

Let's try it again! This is a 3+ hour drive to Waverly–Wakefield, in hopes of seeing the Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Our last trip was not successful, but we will keep our fingers crossed. Other expected birds: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Kinglets, maybe an early warbler or two, and possibly Red-headed Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Vireos, and many more. Dress for the weather and bring snacks. After the field trip we can go down to the Virginia Diner and have a meal. Bad weather will cancel this outing.

Wednesday, April 19th: 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, kingbird10@yahoo.com, 540-430-0186

Join Jo King at this historic site at the southern edge of Augusta County. On this easy walk through open fields, mixed woods, and two ponds we may see waterfowl, woodpeckers, etc. Dress for the weather.

Friday, April 21st: Bell's Lane

Meeting place & time: ABC kiosk on Bell's Lane, Staunton, 8:30 AM

Coordinator: Penny Warren, onthewingnow17@gmail.com, 540.849.9245

Let's do a spring migration walk on Bell's Lane. As usual, we will visit the private pond and then return to the lane for a walk! Rain cancels.

Friday & Saturday, April 28-29th: Chincoteague (Sunday will be on your own / returning home day.)

Meeting place & time: Saturday 8:00 AM in the McDonald's parking lot across from the Best Western. That is in case someone who wants to go finds some other nearby hotel on the island.

Coordinator: Allen Lerner, larnersky@mindspring.com, 540-280-3423

Planning ahead! Friday travel is going down on your own. Allen Lerner will be leaving around 7:00 am and can take three people with him, if anyone wants to carpool. He has six rooms at the Best Western Hotel blocked off in the name of the Augusta Bird Club for those two days. They will hold these rooms

at off-season prices until March 25th. They have breakfast at the hotel.

From there we will go to one of the hiking trails to look for warblers and any early migrating songbirds, with the hopes of finding any leftover wintering birds. After that we can go to the causeway to look for Black-necked Stilts, gulls, shorebirds, any waders. After that we will travel to Saxis NWR to look for Marsh Wren, any rails that may be there, and Seaside Sparrow. We will take some time off until the Wildlife Loop opens up at 3:00 and again meet at McDonald's at 5:00 pm, and we will birding around Tom's Cove Wildlife Loop. This schedule for Saturday is flexible.

Best Western hotel's phone number: 757-336-6557

If there are any questions, contact Allen Lerner.

Saturday, May 6th: Cowbane Preserve

Meeting place & time: the end of Johnson Drive, Stuarts Draft, 8:00 AM

Coordinator: Lynne Parks, v.lynneparks@gmail.com

Lynne and a representative of the DCR will share interesting facts about the location. We'll try for Virginia Rails and other spring migrants, including warblers and sparrows. Expect a two-mile flat walk. Off Rt. 340 in Stuarts Draft, continue straight to the end of Johnson Dr., through the gate, and onto the gravel parking area. We'll be there to direct you

Wednesday, May 17th: Floating / birding on the Middle River

Meeting place & time: Verona / Fort Defiance

Coordinator: Ann Cline, anncline1443@yahoo.com

We would once again like to offer a 'Floating Bird Field Trip' on the Middle River this Spring. Target date is May 17th with May 18th as rain date. The put-in and take-out is in the Verona/Ft. Defiance area. We can help with shuttling. The trip itself will take about 1 1/2 hours.

Great if you have your own vessel, but we have been offered several kayaks and canoes as loaners for the day. The take out would be at Roger Robinson's, which has many mowed paths along the river for continuing birding opportunities. Great spot to have lunch there as well. If interested, email Ann Cline at anncline1443@yahoo.com.

NOTE: Check our website for updates on field trips that have been added, cancelled, or postponed:

www.augustabirdclub.org/Events.php

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, April 22nd: Earth Day Staunton

Meeting place & time: Gypsy Hill Park, Staunton, 10:30

Coordinator: Rich Wood,
beagleboy831@comcast.net

We have enough volunteers to man the table at least, but a few more would be appreciated. That event is open to the public from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, and runs in two shifts: 10:30 – 1:00 and 1:00 – 3:30. (That includes setup and breakdown.)

Saturday, April 22nd: Bell's Lane annual cleanup

Meeting place & time: "beaver ponds" near the north end of Bell's Lane, Staunton, 9:00

Coordinator: Penny Warren, 540.849.9245,
onthewingnow17@gmail.com

Every year we gather to clean up trash from the side of Bell's Lane, in fulfillment of our club's obligation from "adopting" that precious roadway. The more volunteers we get, the faster the work will go! Expect up to two hours. Wear work clothes and gloves, if you have them. Penny will bring the trash grabbers.

Saturday, April 29th: Riverfest

Meeting place & time: Constitution Park, Waynesboro, 9:30

Coordinator: Rich Wood,
beagleboy831@comcast.net

We are still in need of volunteers to help staff our exhibit table at the Riverfest event in Waynesboro! It runs in two shifts: 9:30 – 1:00 and 1:00 – 4:30. (That includes setup and breakdown.) Rich Wood will bring the tables, chairs, banners, brochures, etc. for both this event and Earth Day Staunton.

Saturday, May 13th: Annual picnic brunch

Meeting place & time: Humpback Rocks Picnic Area, Blue Ridge Parkway, 8:00 (details next month)

Coordinator: Linda Matkins,
linda.matkins@gmail.com

Saturday, May 20th: Invasive Plant Removal at Cowbane Prairie Natural Area Preserve

Meeting place & time: the end of Johnson Drive, Stuarts Draft, 9:00 (details next month)

Coordinator: Lynne Parks,
v.lynneparks@gmail.com



RAPTORTHON! 2023

On May 1, the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watchers team will conduct our 11th annual Raptorthon! Our team this year (Vic Laubach, Lynne Parks, Rich Wood, Robyn Puffenbarger) will cover Highland County, Virginia. We're aiming to outdo our 2021 Raptorthon where we ended with 111 species including 8 raptor species. We plan to be out before sunrise looking for Whip-poor-wills and owls before arriving at Paddy Knob (on the border with West Virginia) just after sunrise. We'll then spend the rest of the day birding in Highland County and the Blue Grass area. Wish us luck!

We hope you can sponsor our team this year with a donation of any size. This is our only fund-raising drive of the year. Half of the funds we raise will support HMANA programs such as Hawk Watch Fund grants, and half will support our local Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch. We depend on donations like yours to help keep our hawk watch up-and-running year after year. After our Raptorthon, we'll publish a full report of our day.

We're very grateful to those that have supported us in past years, and hope you can do so again this year. It's easy to donate! Simply visit our Raptorthon page (<https://www.hmana.org/product/rockfish-gap-hawk-watchers/>) and enter your amount at the bottom of the page. Checks can also be mailed to me at 104 Lanchester Ct, Waynesboro, VA 22980 (write checks to "HMANA"). We'd greatly appreciate your support!

**Thank you,
Vic Laubach
Coordinator, Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch**



**American Kestrel (M) in Swoope, March 25.
Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.**



Icicles on McCormick's Mill, during the March 15 field trip. Photo courtesy of Bonnie Hughes.

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

The field trip to McCormick's on March 15 was attended by thirteen hardy birders. Although the weather was in the low 30s, a total of 27 species were identified by sight and sound. Among the highlights were Gadwall, Killdeer, Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Meadowlark and Red-winged Blackbird. Many thanks to all the participants. We hope to re-visit this farm next month in search of migrants and returning summer residents. Happy birding, everyone!

by Josephine King



**Gadwall (F) at McCormick's Mill on March 15.
Photo courtesy of Bonnie Hughes.**

On Saturday, March 18, five early-rising birders went on an expedition to the mysterious pine forests near Waverly and Wakefield, Virginia, in search of the fabled Red-cockaded Woodpecker. Allen Lerner was our guide. We saw many, many birds that day, but at least 95% of them were one of just two species: Brown-headed Nuthatches and Pine Warblers. As we got started birding in the Piney Grove area (shortly before 9:00 AM), it was overcast, damp, and chilly, with lingering drizzle. After lunch the sun came out, and the temperature rose a little. We saw a few Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pileated Woodpeckers, Northern Flickers, and Eastern Phoebes as well as a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Bald Eagle up above. We also heard a few Eastern Towhees and a White-breasted Nuthatch in those pine forests.



Pointing to our main target bird (Red-cockaded Woodpecker) on this trail sign at the Piney Grove Preserve did not help with our luck.

Around 3:00 we drove west and stopped in an open field along Summerfield Road, where several sparrows were scurrying about, as well as Eastern Bluebirds and a Red-tailed Hawk. The Northern Mockingbird in the image below was outside the Virginia Diner in Wakefield. We came across a guy who had just seen the elusive Red-cockaded Woodpecker, on his fifth visit to that forest, but we never did find it in the area he indicated, or anywhere else. Next time maybe? Anyway, many thanks to Allen Larner for driving and for showing us around this unique ecological habitat in the southeastern part of the Old Dominion!

by Andrew Clem



More Pine Warblers were seen near this gate in the forest.

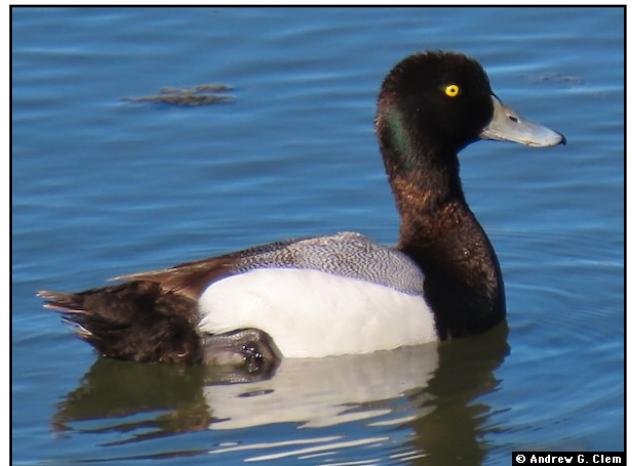


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Brown-headed Nuthatch, Northern Mockingbird, Pine Warbler (M), Eastern Phoebe, Bald Eagle, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. In the Piney Grove forest near Wakefield and Waverly, Virginia on March 18.

OTHER RECENT BIRD SIGHTINGS



Horned Grebe at Hardees pond in Verona on March 25. Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.



Greater Scaup (male), on the pond behind Hardee's in Verona on March 26.



Vesper Sparrow at Cowbane Prairie on March 30. Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.



Resident Bald Eagle near Barrenridge Road gathering soft nesting material on March 30. An eaglet has been spotted in the nest by Bill Benish. Photo courtesy of Ann Cline.

**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE:
APRIL, 2023**

April is a busy month in the bird world, and an exciting time for birders as well! Spring migration is well underway, with many of our favorite resident species returning to their breeding grounds. We all look forward to venturing outdoors to discover what each new day brings, and even catch sight of a possible rarity or two. But April is a very eventful month for your bird club too. When the birds are moving, so are we!

Not only does the Augusta Bird Club support and encourage bird conservation, but we also work hard at promoting our passion for birding and bird education. We do this by offering regular, local bird walks for all levels of birders, extended trips led by some of our experienced members to birding hotspots, maintaining our website and Facebook page, publishing this monthly bulletin, and perhaps most importantly, by getting out in the community with outreach programs and participating at local events. This is who we are, and what we love to do! So, I encourage you to take advantage of many of these club activities and get involved by volunteering a few hours of your time!

And, speaking of our monthly bulletin, I would like to take a moment to recognize, and thank, our bulletin Editor, Andrew Clem. After seven years, and hundreds of dedicated hours of coordinating this newsletter, Andrew is stepping down from his

editorial duties, and passing the torch on to me. Beginning with the May issue, you will see a new look, design, and name (“The Meadowlark”) to our monthly newsletter, but rest assured, it will still have all of the same great information, including interesting and educational articles, wonderful bird photos, news and upcoming events...and even some new pieces! I will try my best to keep Andrew’s legacy alive and moving forward! Stay tuned and Good Birding!

**Rich Wood,
President, Augusta Bird Club**



**Hermit Thrush, in Jollivue, March 20.
Photo courtesy of Warren Faught.**

**AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB’S
FACEBOOK GROUP “GROWS UP”**

[NOTE: The following paragraphs, along with the seven rules listed afterward, were posted on the Augusta Bird Club’s Facebook page on January 23.]

GREETINGS fellow Augusta County-area birders! Once upon a time, perhaps ten or so years ago, this Facebook group was launched as a way for Augusta Bird Club members to more easily share their birding experiences and photographs with each other. For the first few years it was a just a humble, modest-sized group, and we operated on a very informal basis. But over the course of time, more and more people joined, and there are now well over 200 members in the group altogether. That’s at least twice as many people as there are members of the Augusta Bird Club itself!

While this growth is something to be celebrated, it does bring with it certain disadvantages. The decline of inter-personal familiarity creates the potential for misunderstandings to arise, and indeed this is one of the biggest problems with social media in general today -- throughout the United States and the world. Negative vibes proliferate on a massive scale! Yesterday the Augusta Bird Club board held its semi-annual meeting, and we discussed the issue of how to preserve our strong tradition of friendship and camaraderie in this new-fangled cyberspace venue. The result? A set of rules to govern how we all interact in this Facebook group. Please take the time in the near future to review these rules, and if you have any questions, please address them to me or the other group moderator, Penny Warren.

Along these same lines, we have added more screening questions that people who want to join this group should answer. For one thing, it has been made clearer that we would like for the members of this Facebook group who have not yet joined the Augusta Bird Club to strongly consider doing so. In some cases that is just not practical (such as former club members who have moved away but want to stay in touch), and there are a variety of other valid reasons as well. But I've got a hunch that most non-members really don't know what they are missing: an informative monthly bulletin/newsletter that is chock full of photos, monthly meetings that feature a fascinating program presented by prominent birding experts or nature professionals, and the opportunity to go on field trips led by experienced birders. What's not to love?

In closing, I can't tell you how gratifying it has been for me to play a key role in fostering this Facebook group. Do you ever wonder why I spend so much time taking and editing bird photos, and carefully arranging them into those eye-popping "montages"? Because I am driven by a passionate desire to spread the word about all those gorgeous feathered beauties out there, so that more and more people will come to enjoy and better appreciate the world of Nature. Thank you all for sharing in this passion.

**by Andrew Clem
ABC Facebook Group Administrator**

ABC FACEBOOK GROUP RULES:

1) Be respectful and polite! No foul language, and no negative or hostile remarks directed at other people.

2) Be relevant! Only post things of general interest to members of this group. Items concerning public policy on nature conservation, etc. are fine, but anything of an overtly political nature is likely to be removed by the administrators.

3) Be restrained! Unless you are just returning from a trip and want to share lots of bird photos, try to avoid multiple posts within a single day.

4) Respect intellectual property rights! Whenever posting a photo that is not your own, make sure that it is properly credited.

5) Participate! Members of this Facebook group should interact with other members (via comments, etc.) to share their birding experiences at least every once in a while. Don't be shy!

6) Consider joining the club! We hope that new members of this Facebook group will take the next step by joining the Augusta Bird Club, attending our monthly meetings, field trips, and other events, and/or buying seed at our annual seed sale in the fall. Annual dues start at \$15 for individuals.

7) Repeated violations of the above rules may result in removal from this group.



**Field Sparrow,
along the Mill Place trail, March 28**

**(I have been waiting for years to get a well-lit
photo of that species!)**

PARTING THOUGHTS

As most of you folks know, I have decided to step aside as editor of the ABC Bulletin (a.k.a. "newsletter") at the end of this term in May. President Rich Wood will assume those responsibilities effective with the May issue. I will continue to oversee the club's website, which is currently undergoing a series of changes and enhancements. For one thing, there will soon be an online archive of past ABC Bulletins going back to 2008. (Saving documents seems to have gone out of style, I've noticed.) As may be surmised from the preceding article about the ABC Facebook group, I take a firm middle ground in the debate over embracing new technology for purposes of communication. Selective and judicious use of social media, etc. can yield great benefits, but hazards lurk from "artificial intelligence," fake news, etc.

In closing, I can't tell you what a pleasure and an honor it has been to put together this publication for the past seven years. Since Paul Callo handed me the proverbial "baton" in March 2016, I am proud to have instituted a regular summary of the "Field Notes" compiled by Allen Lerner every quarter. I have also included many more bird photographs submitted by various members. I may be a bit of a fussy perfectionist in terms of graphical layout, and I am definitely a stickler for correct English grammar, spelling, and punctuation (do you know the difference between a hyphen, an *n* dash, and an *m* dash??), but I am also aware of my shortcomings. It is most gratifying whenever someone expresses appreciation for my efforts. Thanks to all of you from the bottom of my heart for your patience, understanding, and support. And best wishes to Rich in his new role as editor!

by Andrew Clem
Editor

2023 ELECTIONS!

The ABC will hold its annual election at the April 10 meeting. The slate of officers is:

President: Rich Wood (incumbent)

Vice-President: Vic Laubach (incumbent)

Secretary: Marilyn Nash (incumbent)

Treasurer: Mona Bearor (incumbent)

Editor: Rich Wood (Andrew Clem outgoing)



Rusty Blackbird, at Augusta Springs on March 5. Photo courtesy of Vic Laubach.

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

March 13, 2023

Covenant Presbyterian Church

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by President Rich Wood.

Recent Sightings: The Trumpeter Swan remains on the Ivy St, Waynesboro pond. Also found around our area were Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Wood Ducks, Coots, Northern Harriers, and Bald Eagles. Woodcocks were seen and heard in abundance at Beagle Gap on Skyline Drive. Hummingbirds are expected approximately 2 weeks early this year.

Field Trips: Allen Lerner organized a recent field trip to Lake Anna which found 45 species. Allen will lead a trip to Piney Grove to look for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers on 3/18. Allen will also lead a trip to Chincoteague on 4/28-29. Penny Warren will lead a trip to Bell's Lane on 3/20. Andrew Clem will lead a trip to Chimney Hollow on 4/8.

Andrew has been making some formatting changes to our website. Field trips and activities are now more prominent and user friendly.

Robin Puffenbarger, also a member of the Rockingham County Bird Club, announced the completion and sale of the new edition of their *Birds of Rockingham County* publication.

The Education Committee and Conservation Committee did not have reports.

Membership Committee – We have 3 new members which puts us to 162 members.

Nominating Committee: We technically do not have an active nominating committee to elect ABC board members. Everyone in attendance was encouraged to place nominations for President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, and Newsletter Editor in the provided container or contact any board member with input. The club will vote on these positions at the April 10th meeting.

Activities: The club has good volunteer coverage for our table at the Earth Day celebration in Staunton on April 22. But we need more volunteers for Riverfest in Waynesboro on April 29. Riverfest is a very entertaining, educational event celebrating the South River and its environment. It is attended by thousands of people every year and is great exposure for our club. If you can help for even a short time that day, please contact Rich Wood, beagleboy831@comcast.net.

Our May meeting will be held on May 13 at the Humpback Rocks picnic area on the Blue Ridge Parkway. There will be a bird walk first with a delicious potluck brunch afterwards.

Program: Ashley Peale, avian ecologist from Virginia Tech reported on the Second Virginia Breeding Bird Survey. Ashley is in the process of organizing and interpreting the vast amounts of data accumulated, some of which was contributed by ABC members. There was some good news and some not-so-good news for our breeding birds, but Ashley left us with hope that gathering information like the VABBS will be very important for conservation efforts.

**Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Nash, Secretary**

TREASURER'S REPORT

From now on the Treasurer's Report from Mona Bearor will only be published every other month: January, March, May, etc.

BIRD QUIZ!

Can you identify this bird?
(Photographed in June 2022 near Braley Pond.)



The answer will be revealed at the April meeting!

No email responses, please!

~
Last month: Bearded Reedling

**“What’s a
Chat GPT,
anyway?”**



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

Club website:
www.augustabirdclub.org

Virginia Society of Ornithology
www.viriniabirds.net