



The Meadowlark

The monthly newsletter of the Augusta Bird Club

In This Issue

- **Upcoming Field Trips and Events**
- **Trip Reports**
- **Recent Sightings**
- **Conservation Corner**
- **2023 Raptorthon**
- **President's Message**
- **Education Spotlight**
- **Treasurer's Report**
- **Membership Report**
- **ABC Meeting Minutes**

A New Look

Rich Wood, Editor

Beginning this with this issue, the Bulletin becomes our Newsletter, and will have a new look, with some new features as well. However, *The Meadowlark*, as it will now be called, will still continue to include all the great information that's been published for many years! You can get a quick view of what's included in our "In This Issue" box on the left.

A few of the new highlights will include the *Conservation Corner*-articles that focus on a variety of nature topics that are connected to birds. The *Education Spotlight* will introduce members to information, efforts, ideas and programs that are currently being used to teach people about birding and bird conservation. In future issues we'll also take a look at some of our local birding hotspots, species profiles and the latest in bird science and research. We have so much to share and hope you enjoy *The Meadowlark!* We would love to hear from you about your thoughts of the "new look," and other ideas we may include in future issues!



Spring Migration in Full Swing!

Louisiana Waterthrush (L), Male Wood Duck (R)

photos by Vic Laubach



Upcoming Field Trips & Events-At A Glance (see page 2 for details)

- **Saturday, May 6 (8am) - Field Trip - Cowbane Preserve**
- **Saturday, May 13 (8am) - Annual Picnic Brunch - Humpback Rocks Picnic Area (Blue Ridge Parkway)**
- **Wednesday, May 17 (9am) - Field Trip - McCormick's Mill Farm**
- **Wednesday, May 17 (9am) - Birding by Canoe Field Trip - Middle River**
- **Saturday, May 23 (9am) - Invasive Plant Removal Volunteer Project - Cowbane Preserve**



Upcoming Field Trips & Events

Saturday, May 6 - Field Trip - Cowbane Preserve-Stuarts Draft

Meeting Time & Place: 8:00 am - the end of Johnson Drive

Leader: Lynne Parks (v.lynneparks@gmail.com)



Lynne and a representative from VA DCR will provide interesting facts about the location. We'll try for Virginia Rails and other spring migrants, including warblers and sparrows. Expect a 2-mile, flat walk. Off Rt 340 in Stuarts Draft, continue straight to the end of Johnson Dr, through the gate and into the small gravel parking area. We'll be there to direct you. Wear sturdy walking shoes. Water, sunscreen and bug spray recommended.

Saturday, May 13 - Bird Walk & Annual Picnic Brunch

Meeting Time & Place: 8:00 am - Humpback Rocks Picnic Area-Blue Ridge Parkway

Leader: Linda Matkins (linda.matkins@gmail.com)



Join us for our Annual Potluck Picnic Brunch along the beautiful Blue Ridge Parkway! We'll work up our appetites with a leisurely 1-mile bird walk starting at 8am, as we take a search for spring migrants such as warblers, vireos, flycatchers, tanagers and much more! Please contact Linda for what to bring to share with the group. Wear sturdy walking shoes.

Wednesday, May 17 (raindate May 18) - Field Trip - Birding By Canoe - Middle River

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 am -

Leader: Ann Cline (anncline1443@yahoo.com)



Calling all paddlers! We would once again like to offer a 'Floating Bird Field Trip' on the Middle River this Spring. 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. Water and bug spray recommended.

Wednesday, May 17 - Field Trip - McCormick's Mill Farm

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 am - Mill Parking Lot

Leader: Jo King (kingbird10@yahoo.com)



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 will be looking for newly-arriving migrants, along with several species of woodpeckers, sparrows, waterfowl, warblers, and returning breeders. Rain will cancel the trip.

Saturday, May 20 - Invasives Plant Removal Volunteer Project-Cowbane Preserve-Stuarts Draft

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 am - the end of Johnson Drive

Leader: Lynne Parks (v.lynneparks@gmail.com)



Grab your gloves and join us as we help one of our favorite birding hotspots, by removing the invasive, non-native Garlic Mustard plant. Wear sturdy walking shoes. Sunscreen and bug spray recommended. Please bring a re-useable water bottle and we'll provide the water. Cancelled if raining.

Field Trip Reports

Two members of the club returned for a second trip to **Piney Grove on April 15th** to search for the Endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. This time they were successful, as they located two of the elusive birds! The trip totalled about 33 + species with highlights including: White-eyed Vireo, Black & White, Hooded and Prairie Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Louisiana Waterthrush and Ovenbird.

by Allen Larner

Eight members of the Augusta Bird Club met on **Wednesday, April 19th** to conduct a bird walk at **McCormick's Mill Farm** in Raphine, Va. Thirty seven species were recorded. The weather was clear and warm with no wind. We had great views of six Blue-winged Teal, along with a Solitary Sandpiper, several Woodpecker species and a Cooper's Hawk. Also it is good to mention the return of the Eastern Towhee and Brown Thrasher. Other highlights included: Tree and Barn Swallows, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Chipping, Song, White-throated, White-crowned and Field Sparrows.

by Josephine King



Blue-winged Teal-McCormick's Mill Farm
photo by Bonnie Hughes

The bird walk along **Bell's Lane on Friday April 21st** had a great turnout, both in terms of participants (well over a dozen ABC members) AND birds! We heard several Gray Catbirds at various places, but they were very shy and hard to actually see. For many of us it was the first one of the year. We also heard a Great Crested Flycatcher, but never saw it. The only warbler species was a Yellow-rumped "butter butt," but there were several Ruby-crowned Kinglets, with males displaying their crowns and/or singing. A singing Eastern Towhee was remarkably tame as we walked past to get a better closeup view. We saw pairs of Eastern Bluebirds and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were getting ready to raise young ones at nest holes, the former being in a tree cavity! American Goldfinches, Brown Thrashers, Eastern Phoebe, a Red-tailed Hawk, and finally a Blue-winged Teal rounded out a very rewarding morning of birding. Josephine King kept track of everything we observed, and she tallied 38 species altogether. Thanks to all who came!

by Andrew Clem



Recent Sightings

Enjoy some beautiful photos from some our club members!



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher-Bald Rock Rd.
photo by Jim Hill



Red-headed Woodpecker - Lyndhurst
photo by Bonnie Hughes



Cerulean Warbler - Rt 610
photo by Lynne Parks



Vic Laubach

Grasshopper Sparrow - Swoope



Mark Kosiewski

Barred Owl - Big Levels



© Andrew G. Clem

Blue-headed Vireo at nest
Humpback Rocks Picnic Area-Blue Ridge Parkway

Conservation Corner-Focus on Native Plants

Hoary Mountain Mint

by Lynne Parks, Conservation Chair



The main pollinator attraction in my Staunton garden is the Hoary Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*). Combine the new Moynihan Train Hall in New York City with a Las Vegas buffet, and you get an idea how crowded this plant is with insects! I've seen dozens of species of native bees, butterflies, beneficial wasps, beetles, and flies. It hosts moths such as the Wavy-lined Emerald, Hermit Sphinx, and Crocus Geometer. Their caterpillars are essential bird food. Skippers and hairstreaks mob the flowers too. You'll enjoy the colorful, humming, buzzing action. In my experience, you can step close, everyone is too busy with buggy business to mind.

Like all mints, this perennial has a square stem, and opposite leaves, with a spearmint-like fragrance. The top leaves are silvery, and the flowers present in dense clusters, ranging white to lavender with purple spots. It grows 3-4' tall flowering June through Oct. It spreads so give it some space, but the rhizomes are shallow, which makes them easy to pull and share. It's a low maintenance plant easily grown in average, dry to medium well drained soils in full to part shade. It's drought tolerant and unpalatable to deer!

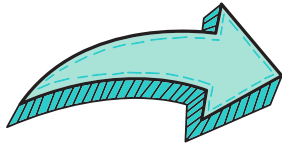
With sharply declining insect and bird populations, we need supportive habitat more than ever. Your yard is a great place to start. This plant is a champ. I've seen it growing prettily in Augusta County along small lanes and old fields in the foothills. You can use the leaves for tea, desserts, or potpourri.



Photo courtesy of Prairie Moon Nursery



Saturday, May 13, 2023



Help support (\$) the
Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch!

Red-tailed Hawk

Raptorthon!

2023

Be part of a continental effort to support raptor study and conservation

HMANA

There's still time to sponsor our Raptorthon! The Rockfish Gap Hawk Watchers team (Vic Laubach, Lynne Parks, Rich Wood, Robyn Puffenbarger) will conduct our 11th annual Raptorthon in Highland County, tomorrow, May 1st! This is our only fund-raising drive of the year to help support the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch. We depend on donations like yours to help keep our hawk watch up-and-running year-after-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. Alternatively, checks can 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)

President's Message

I recently read an article in *Bird Watcher's Digest* by D. George Prisbe-Przybysz titled "From Birder to Bird Watcher." This short piece describes his "evolution" to this hobby/passion we all love so much....and I have to agree, this applies to me too! The focus of George's article states that he started as "bird watcher" as a kid growing up in South Dakota, grew into a "birder" as an adult, and has now returned to being a "bird watcher" once again!

In the past few years, I've looked at my interest in birds in the same way. Maybe it was due the guidance of staying home during the pandemic, or maybe it's been that I felt a bit guilty about contributing more carbon emissions to our climate concerns to chase rarities to add to my life list. But perhaps the biggest effect on my reversion to old-school "bird watching" is purely the fact that I've come to appreciate the birds around our own home! Both my wife and I really enjoy watching, observing and listening to "our" backyard birds! From their unique behaviors, adaptations, amazing nest-building skills and feeder antics, to hearing their cool songs and calls. They entertain us, educate us and without sounding too wholistic, give us a sense of peace-especially in a world increasingly full of environmental concerns! Yes, watching our home birds provides an important connection to nature!

Don't get me wrong, I still love the challenge of adding new birds I've never seen before, to my life list, or trying to see a new bird that's showed up in our County. I still support technology, such as Ebird, and all the great apps that are available, but slowing down a bit and returning to my roots has been very rewarding! You can call me a birder or a bird watcher, either one is fine by me, and I accept them both with great pride! Good birding (or Bird Watching)!

A few enjoyable backyard "bird watching" moments!



A Carolina Wren peaks out of some of my hanging laundry.

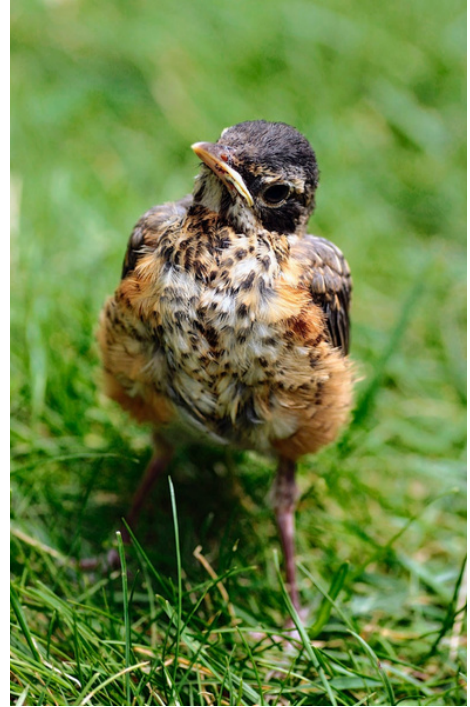


A male Northern Cardinal enjoying our backyard bird bath.

Education Spotlight

Baby Birds - What to Do and What NOT to Do

The season of nestlings and fledglings has arrived! Young birds are often taken in by well-meaning individuals who may not realize that the parent is still keeping a watchful eye on its offspring. Since specialized care is required for young birds, the mortality rate is very high in these cases. Be very sure that the bird you find is abandoned or injured before you remove it from its natural environment. Baby birds are NOT rejected by their parents if a person handles them. In fact, most birds have a very poor sense of smell. It is simply not true that the parents will reject a nestling after it has been handled by a human. If a nestling is found on the ground and it is not fully feathered, it is best to put it back into the nest. Some young birds require food every 20 minutes and the parents are much better equipped to take care of it than we humans are.



If you find nestlings, and the nest has become dislodged from where it was originally built, you can try to replace it in that location. If you find nestlings but cannot locate the nest, you can use a substitute, any shallow weatherproof container of appropriate size, line it with dry grass or other materials, punch holes in the bottom for drainage, and attach the new nest to the tree securely. Put the nestlings back in and leave it alone so the parents can reclaim their offspring. Watch from a safe distance – preferably from indoors - to make sure parents return.

Keep the number of your local wildlife rehabber handy in case it is needed. There are many permitted wildlife rehabilitators throughout the state of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources maintains an online directory of permitted wildlife rehabilitators, so that you may search by county and species. The Wildlife Center of Virginia is located right here, in Waynesboro. They can be reached at 540-942-9453.

2023 Officer Election Results

The ABC held its annual election at the April 10th meeting. The following slate of officers were re-elected:

President: Rich Wood

Vice-President: Vic Laubach

Secretary: Marilyn Nash

Treasurer: Mona Bearor

Newsletter Editor: Rich Wood (Andrew Clem outgoing)

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks."

-John Muir

Treasurer's Report for April 29, 2023

Opening Balance April 1, 2023		\$34,049.50
Revenue		
Dues	\$ 30.00	
Donations	\$ 14.64	
Interest	\$ 4.20	
Total Revenue	\$ 48.84	
Expenses		
Education & Outreach	\$ 182.50	
Conservation	\$ 78.54	
Administration	\$ 24.47	
Total Expenses	\$ 285.51	
Closing Balance April 29, 2023		\$33,812.83

Membership Report

Welcome New Members!

Let's all welcome our new members! ABC thanks you for your support and we look forward to seeing you at monthly programs and events.



Howard Davis
Kristin Fuoco
Rae Kasdan
Sue Leonard
John Rendo
Donna Stokes
Kim Harrell

ABC's membership is now 164 strong!

Remember to check us out at:

www.augustabirdclub.org



April Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2023

Covenant Presbyterian Church

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 by President Rich Wood.

Recent Sightings: At Cowbane preserve - Vesper Sparrow, Snipe, Common Yellowthroat, Cliff Swallows. Augusta Springs - Virginia Rail. Waynesboro- Trumpeter Swan. Big Levels - Whip-poor-will and Chuck-will's-widow. Bell's Lane – Brown Thrasher, Catbird, Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Field Trips: The Chimney Hollow hike found several Louisiana Waterthrushes, 2 White-breasted Nuthatches building a nest, turkeys, Blue-headed Vireo. Allen Larner's trip to Piney Grove did not find Red-cockaded Woodpeckers but another try is scheduled for 4/15/23. Upcoming hikes are to McCormick's Mill, Bell's Lane, and Cowbane Preserve. Everyone should check information about field trips on the newly designed Activities Section of the ABC website.

Education: The ABC will be represented at 2 upcoming community festivals: Earth Day on 4/22 at Gypsy Hill Park in Staunton, and Riverfest on 4/29 at Constitution Park in Waynesboro. More volunteers are needed for Riverfest. Contact Rich (beagleboy831@comcast.net) if you can help. These types of activities are important ways to promote birding and our organization. Your participation is needed.

Conservation: (1) Lynne Parks is preparing coloring pages and "seed bombs" for the Earth Day ABC table. (2) She has given 2 very successful walks at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind.(3) She will give a talk at the Waynesboro Fish and Game meeting. (4) On 5/6 at 9 am she will lead volunteers from the ABC at the Cowbane Preserve where we will pull invasive plants. All are encouraged to help.

Hospitality:The final meeting of this ABC year will be May 13th at the Humpback Rocks Picnic Area. We will bird from 8:00-10:00 am followed by a potluck brunch.

Board Elections:Members unanimously elected the following board members for the upcoming year: President and newsletter editor - Rich Wood. Vice-president – Vic Laubach, Secretary – Marilyn Nash, Treasurer – Mona Bearor.

Rich will be taking over the editor role from retiring Andrew Clem, who has served creatively and valiantly for several years. Rich has a new computer program that will give a different look to the newsletter, while continuing to provide all important information. He plans to provide monthly newsletters throughout the summer which will also be new for this club.

Raptorthon: Vic Laubach will lead a group of highly skilled ABC members on a fundraising Raptorthon in May. They will attempt to break their previous record of 111 avian species (not just raptors) seen over a 24-hour period. Funds raised will benefit our local hawk watch and also HMANA (Hawk Migration Association of North America). You can donate by going to their website, HMANA.org or contact Vic at laubach@virginia.edu.

Program: Our speaker for the evening was unable to attend due to a family emergency, so Vice-president Vic Laubach stepped in to give a program on eBird. EBird is a vast program developed through the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology that encourages anyone, of all skill levels, throughout the world, to list birds they identify. The information can be maintained for the individual birder, but most importantly goes into a vast database that is analyzed and used to benefit birds across the globe through scientific research and conservation. To learn more about eBird, and many other Cornell lab features such as Merlin, a sound ID program, go to eBird.org or the Cornell Lab website. The ABC will have future programs on technology to help us enjoy birding even more.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Nash

Secretary