

# THE MEADOWLARK

*The monthly newsletter of the Augusta Bird Club*



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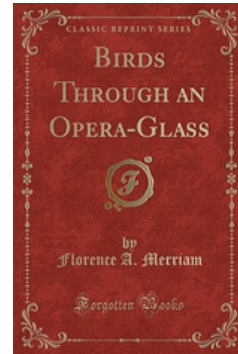
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## The First Lady of Ornithology

by Penny Warren



*Bailey's 1886 yearbook photo from her time at Smith College.*



Florence A. Merriam-Bailey (1863–1948) is considered one of the first birdwatchers who quietly watched, enjoyed, and learned about birds in their natural habitat. She was often referred to as the First Lady of Ornithology.

During her time at Smith College, she was pivotal in founding one of the first chapters of Audubon at Smith. She decided to take her classmates outdoors for nature bird walks to counter the fashion trend of the day, feathers in hats, so that “they will wear feathers never more.” Ultimately, one-third of the student body denounced the wearing of feathers, and hundreds of other women elsewhere were protesting the millinery industry’s use of birds. This factor and many other efforts helped pave the way to the Lacey Act of 1900 and ultimately to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Being a prolific writer, she contributed many articles to the *Audubon* magazine geared toward amateur birdwatchers, an effort that helped lead to the popularity of the birding movement. From these articles, a book was created entitled *Birds Through the Opera Glass*. It offers a wonderful glimpse into a Victorian-era time capsule, from the style of writing, frequent quotes from Thoreau, and the usage of former names of some of the birds, e.g., Bull Bat, Hemlock Warbler, Devil-down Head, and Bee Martin. Her writings are charming, sweet, and very insightful. More importantly, the book is considered to be the first field guide to American birds.

In Washington, DC, Florence met her future husband, Vernon Bailey, a naturalist. Together they traveled and studied throughout the US. Florence wrote many travelogues and her jewel-in-the-crown field guide, *Birds of New Mexico*. While in DC, she cofounded the Audubon Society of Washington, DC, taught birding classes at the National Zoo, and published a text book that was used in the classrooms across the city.

During her lifetime, Florence was lauded with being the first female associate of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU); she was the first woman to receive the Brewster Medal (for her *Birds of New Mexico*) from the AOU; she was awarded an honorary doctorate from University of New Mexico; and she had a small mountain chickadee native to Southern California, the *Parus gambeli baileyae*, named in her honor.

A remarkable woman, a remarkable book!

## UPCOMING MEETING

Monday, October 9, 2023, 7:00 pm

Covenant Presbyterian Church

2001 N Coalter St

Staunton, VA 24401

**Guest Speaker: Meagan Thomas**

***History of the Richmond Falcon Cam  
and the Rebound of Virginia's Peregrine Falcons***



Photo by Lee Walker

Richmond breeding female takes flight.

Meagan Thomas is a Watchable Wildlife Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Her work generates public awareness for species of greatest conservation need through the provision of wildlife viewing–related recreational opportunities like birding, citizen science, and wildlife-viewing cameras. She has two BS degrees from Towson University; one in Animal Behavior and one in Organismal Biology and Ecology, as well as an MS degree from Eastern Illinois University. When she isn't working, she enjoys spending time on the water with her husband and two dogs.

Meagan's talk is titled "History of the Richmond Falcon Cam and the Rebound of Virginia's Peregrine Falcons." DWR's Falcon Cam is a live-streaming wildlife-viewing experience that broadcasts the activities of an urban nesting Peregrine pair in Richmond to viewers across the country. With an average of 400,000 annual views, the Falcon Cam is a highly anticipated "watch" every spring that documents falcon courtship behaviors, egg-laying, hatching, chick rearing, and ultimately fledging. This presentation will cover everything you could ever want to know about the Falcon Cam, including a history of the numerous birds seen on camera throughout the years, how the Falcon Cam aids DWR biologists with their work, and an overview of the natural history, decline, and conservation of Peregrine Falcons across the Commonwealth.

**PLEASE NOTE: Since our speaker is distant, this presentation will be a live Zoom, and there will be no pre-meeting dinner.**

# Field Trip Reports



A light turnout of 3 members joined leader Allen Lerner for a trip up on **Afton Mountain on September 2**. Our small group tallied 33 species, with highlights being Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Cape May and Nashville Warblers, Scarlet Tanager, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Eastern Wood Pewee.

The weather was almost perfect on **September 9** as 8 ABC members and guests were led on a hike by Andrew Clem along the **Shenandoah Mountain Trail**, on the western edge of Augusta County. It didn't take long before we came upon our first cluster of migrating birds, but we could identify only one species for sure: a Black-throated Green Warbler. After a while we heard and saw a group of Scarlet Tanagers, all of them being either female or juveniles. Next was a Pine Warbler in the tree tops, followed by both White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches. At the trail crossing along the mountain slope an American Redstart showed itself, and on the way back we finally managed to see one of the Blue-headed Vireos that had been singing and chatting. But the biggest highlight of the day was seeing a Ruffed Grouse as it flushed about 20 feet away. We probably saw a total of 3 of them in two different locations. Altogether our total species count was a modest 21. Thanks to all the participants who joined in the fun!

We couldn't have asked for a prettier sunny day at the **Augusta Springs Wetlands walk on Sept. 16**. Thirteen of us walked around the pond twice, but our biggest treat was along the power line cut, where we found a flock of warblers seen at eye level. We had 45 species of birds altogether, including 12 species of warblers and 4 of vireos—Blue-headed, Yellow-throated, White- and Red-eyed. There were 14 first-year Wood Ducks huddled together in the pond. Cedar Waxwings gathered in the snags, and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks chipped in the pines. The goldenrod, great blue lobelia, and asters were gorgeous. Submitted by Lynne Parks.



Palm Warbler—Augusta Springs Wetlands  
*photo by Andrew Clem*

It was a cloudy day along **Bells Lane this past Saturday, September 30**, without much activity. We did find a few scattered birds with half a dozen warbler species, including nice looks at Cape May, Magnolia, Pine, Bay-breasted, and Northern Parula. A second-year Bald Eagle soared past, and lots of Blue Jays and vultures were on the move. American Kestrels were perched and scanning for brunch. Meadowlarks flushed and got noisy on occasion. Six of us tallied 39 species. We walked up to the high point (and back), but the ponds were low and empty. Submitted by Lynne Parks and Allen Lerner.



## Augusta County Christmas Bird Count Sunday, December 17

For information on how you can participate,  
contact Allen Lerner ([lanersky@mindspring.com](mailto:lanersky@mindspring.com))



## Waynesboro Christmas Bird Count Date TBD—Stay tuned for more details!

## Upcoming Field Trips



### **Saturday, October 7—Augusta Springs Wetlands**

Meeting Time & Place: 8:00 am, parking lot along US-250 (2735 Little Calf Pasture Hwy)

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

If you missed the September walk, Lynne is returning here in October! Smack dab in the middle of fall migration with some early fall foliage will make for a great morning walk! We'll be on the lookout for confusing fall warblers, vireos, Winter Wrens, woodpeckers, and much more! The wetlands walk is on level ground that is a combination of boardwalk, packed earth, and cracked pavement. The loop is 0.8 mi. We circle the pond through mixed woods and open areas. Wear comfortable walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring water & snacks. Rain will cancel.

### **Wednesday, October 18 (rain date October 25)—McCormick Farm**

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 am, Mill parking lot

Leader: Jo King (kingbird@yahoo.com; (540) 430-0186)

Fall migration is underway, and Jo will be searching for a variety of fall migrants, on this easy walk through mixed woods and adjacent two ponds. The autumn season at McCormick Farm is always special, and many times turns up some great birds! Please bring water, and wear comfortable walking shoes. McCormick Farm is located 0.5 mi east of I-81 (Raphine exit), just off SR-606.

### **Saturday, October 28—Boy Scout camp trail / road and Swoope**

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 am, Food Lion lower parking lot on N Coalter St in Staunton

Leader: Andrew Clem (agclem@comcast.net); (540) 849-8234

We will hike along this gravel road up into the foothill woods for about one mile in each direction, and then check out the usual spots in Swoope. This is hunting season, so please wear some bright (blaze-orange if you got it) clothing! Please bring water, and wear comfortable walking shoes. Rain will cancel.

## **COMING UP IN EARLY NOVEMBER**

### **Monday, November 6—Bell's Lane**

Meeting Time & Place: 8:30 am, Bird Club kiosk

Leader: Penny Warren (onthewingnow17@gmail.com); (540) 849-9245

We'll kick off early November with a morning walk on Bell's Lane, starting with a visit to the private pond, with permission, and then back to the lane and continue birding from there.

A variety of birds should greet us in the mixed habitats! Rain will cancel.



## Recent Sightings



Tennessee Warbler (*photo by Vic Laubach*)



White-eyed Vireo—Bell's Lane (9/9/23)  
*photo by Andrew Clem*



Broad-winged Hawk—Dooms  
*photo by Rich Wood*



Cedar Waxwing—Barren Ridge  
*photo by Ann Cline*



American Goldfinch  
*photo by Vic Laubach*



Palm Warbler—Barren Ridge  
*photo by Ann Cline*



Tennessee Warbler—Mill Place Trail, Verona  
*photo by Andrew Clem*



Blackpoll Warbler—Bell's Lane  
*photo by Jim Hill*

# Cat-astrophic for Birds

*by Lynne Parks*

Free-roaming cats are a leading cause of wild bird mortality. In the United States alone, studies show they kill 2.4 billion birds a year and billions more beneficial small mammals, lizards, amphibians, and insects. A free-roaming cat is any cat that is not confined in a home, including outdoor pets; strays; and abandoned, colony, and feral cats.

I see cats everywhere. In fields hunting while I'm scanning for grassland birds, in woods as I listen for warblers and thrushes, at water's edge while I look for sandpipers, and in town stalking bird feeders. The problem is that cats hunt by nature. They kill at will, not only when they are hungry. They can also chase parent birds away from nests, having an exponentially negative effect on populations. Cats are not native predators, and the bacteria in their saliva is toxic to birds. According to the Wildlife Center of Virginia, cat attacks account for frequent admissions, and the survival rate is very low. Outside, they also spread toxoplasmosis through their stool, causing serious infections in other species. As for barn cats, it's better to support natural predators like barn owls and rat snakes. Many times, I've seen barn cats killing birds for no reason, only instinct.

I love cats. I have two rescue cats at home. They are indoor cats who live significantly longer lives than outdoor cats. I keep them happy with play and I'm building them a catio—a secure enclosed patio. They appreciate the wide windowsills in our home, birdfeeder watching, bird videos, and belly rubs. I keep them inside to protect birds and other wildlife, but also to keep them safe. Outdoors they are exposed to predation, disease, parasites, injury, and cruelty.

Americans own 86 million pet cats, and two-thirds of them are kept indoors. The other third become small animals' worst nightmares. There are at least 40 million other free-roaming cats causing enormous damage to our ecosystems. Nature has many essential moving parts, and to disrupt bird (and other) populations is to not only rob us of our joy, but to upset pollination, seed dispersal, insect and disease control. Given what we know about plummeting wildlife numbers, the loss from predation by cats is not sustainable. Please keep kitties indoors!

Sources: The Humane Society of the United States, PAWS, American Bird Conservancy, and The Wildlife Society.







## Online Store: 2023 ABC Birdseed Sale (go to [www.augustabirdclub.org](http://www.augustabirdclub.org))

**Pick up: Saturday, November 4 | 8:30 am–noon**  
Augusta County Government Center, Dick Huff Lane, Verona

Deadline 10/28 for online orders (USPS orders should be mailed in time to arrive by 10/27). Prices include sales tax.

### REMINDER!

Memberships can be renewed for 2024 along with your seed order!

*This online store is PCI DSS-certified, which is the highest international standard for secure data exchanges for online stores and payment systems. It is embedded within the ABC's website for your convenience.*



## **2024 Nature Camp!**

ABC Nature Camp Scholarships Available!



Information about the ABC Nature Camp 2024 scholarship is now on our website! The Nature Camp page includes information about the camp, the scholarship process, this year's essay topic, and a link to the fillable application form. Big thanks to Crista Cabe for redesigning the application and to Andrew Clem for updating the webpage. Please help spread the word to potential Nature Campers. **If you have any questions, contact Sarah Foster ([fostercabin@hotmail.com](mailto:fostercabin@hotmail.com)).**

# President's Message

by Rich Wood

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines *conservation* as “a careful preservation and protection of something.” It defines *community* as “a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society.” Although these dictionary definitions may not have been the main motivation for the Montgomery Hall Park Pollinator Garden project in Staunton, it certainly reinforced one of ABC’s goals of “community conservation”!

In 2022, our Conservation Committee Chairperson, Lynne Parks, had the idea to begin a native garden campaign to create more local habitat. As she reminded us, to thrive, birds need native foods such as seeds, nuts, fruits, berries, nectar, and insects. Caterpillars are essential baby foods for birds too. Lynne discussed her plan with the Board, as well as officials from the Staunton Parks & Recreation Department.

The goals were simple:

- (1) to provide additional native plant habitat for wildlife in our local communities;
- (2) to educate the public about the importance of planting native plants for pollinators; and
- (3) to use the garden as a demonstration site for residents / visitors to encourage them to do the same on their own properties.

Her strategy involved getting initial approval from park administrators to install the new garden in Montgomery Hall Park. She then reached out to form a partnership with the Beverley Garden Club and the Augusta Garden Club for planning and financial support. Finally, the time came to gather the workforce to “get their hands dirty” and bring it all together! After much planning, purchasing the plants, laying the mulch, planting, and many follow-up visits to keep the new plants watered, the garden literally came to life! The new pollinator garden hosts 37 species so far! The final step has just been completed, as the new, professional-looking interpretive sign is now in place! We hope this will be the first of many similar projects throughout Augusta County and the Cities of Staunton and Waynesboro! If you have a chance, please swing by the park and check out the new pollinator garden and see what conservation in our community looks like! Enjoy!



Gray Goldenrod is just one of 37 species of native plants on display in the garden.

Stepping stones lead visitors up to the new interpretive sign in the Montgomery Hall Park Pollinator Garden.



Augusta Bird Club Monthly Meeting  
September 11, 2023  
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Staunton, VA

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

**Recent Sightings:** Night Hawks, Chimney Swifts (775 at Stuart Hall in Staunton), hummingbirds, and many warblers.

**Field Trip Reports:** (1) On 9/2/23 Allen Lerner led folks to the Blue Ridge Parkway, where they saw 30 different species, including a Screech Owl. (2) Andrew Clem led a hike to the Shenandoah Mountain Trail in Highland County where they saw a Black-throated Green Warbler, Redstart, Scarlet Tanager, Pewees, Pine Warbler, and Ruffed Grouse. Upcoming trips include Augusta Springs, Bells Lane, and McCormick's Mill.

**Newsletter and website:** Rich Wood is our Newsletter Editor. Everyone is encouraged to read our monthly newsletter for a variety of interesting articles, field trip information, and much more. Anyone wanting to put something in the newsletter should contact Rich. Andrew Clem is in charge of the website. It is being redesigned and regularly updated for both our members and the general public. It will have the latest information on hikes, club contact information, the birdseed sale, and more. Past newsletters will be available on the website.

**Hawkwatch:** Vic Laubach is the Hawkwatch Coordinator. He reports that bird numbers are good and that they have a good number of volunteers to help with spotting and counting. Anyone interested in becoming a counter or observer should contact Vic. He will be giving a presentation on 9/12/23 at the Wayne Theatre in Waynesboro on the Watch. All are welcome. The site of the Hawkwatch, The Inn at Afton, continues to deteriorate, and its future is uncertain. The owners of the property have always liked the Hawkwatch, and Vic is going to talk with them about the future of this site for the Watch.

**Birdseed Sale:** Crista Cabe is coordinating the sale and working hard on negotiating prices and ordering seed. Order forms will be available by the end of September. Orders need to be received by 10/27. Pick up is 11/4 at the Government Center. This is our only fundraiser of the year and is so important because the money raised is used for Nature Camp Scholarships.

**Conservation:** Lynne Parks leads this committee and has been hard at work on several projects. (1) Hikes have been led at the Boy Scout Camp. (2) Work continues at the Montgomery Hall native plant garden. (3) The Bessie Weller Nature Trail is almost finished. Lynne is always looking for more help both from individuals and the community to work with these projects.

**Christmas Bird Counts:** The Augusta County CBC is scheduled for Sunday, December 17. Allen Lerner is coordinating. Crista Cabe leads the Waynesboro count; its date is not yet decided.

**Membership:** We currently have 170 members.

**Program:** Sara Holberg gave the presentation on "Keeping Augusta County Bird Friendly: Perspectives from a Land-Use Planner." She discussed land use and gave examples of good and bad. She stressed that partnerships are needed and encouraged everyone to get involved in preserving land for wildlife and all of us.

Submitted by Marilyn Nash, Secretary

# Membership

by Mona Bearor, Membership Coordinator

We want to extend a warm welcome to new members  
Linda & Dale Kerns and Valerie Cribbs!  
Our current membership now stands at 173.



## REMINDER!

**Memberships can be renewed for 2024 along with your seed order!**



Remember that gift memberships are always available for Birthdays, for Holiday gifts—or for no reason at all! An appropriate card announcing your gift will accompany the membership brochure and birding information sent to all new members.

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**Remember to check us out at**

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



Virginia Society of Ornithology: *[www.viriniabirds.org](http://www.viriniabirds.org)*

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