ANNUAL SPRING PICNIC BRUNCH!

Date: Saturday, May 21st, 8:00 AM - noon

Place: Humpback Rocks Picnic Area, Blue Ridge Parkway 8.5 miles south of I-64 about 2.5 miles past Humpback Rocks Visitors Area

Our annual spring brunch and field trip is being held at Humpback Rocks Picnic Area on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Bird walks will take place on trails around the picnic area from 8:00 until about 10:00 with brunch following. Please bring a brunch/breakfast item to share with the group. The club will provide beverages and tableware. Target birds include a variety of warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Ravens, Dark-eyed Juncos, Wood Thrushes, and more. Please come join the group for a morning of birding, food, and fellowship.

by Linda Matkins

This Red-eyed Vireo was at our picnic last year!

HIGHLAND COUNTY WEEKEND WITH THE BIRD CLUB!

As was announced in last month’s newsletter, we are planning a weekend full of birding activities in Highland County using Lisa Hamilton’s cabin and barn as a home base. The trip will be on June 11-12 and people who want to attend can come for either Saturday or Sunday or (if you want to see more species) both days. About 15 people have shown an interest so far. People who want to spend Saturday night can camp on the porch of the barn. Note that there is no inside bathroom but there is an outhouse and running water. There are a variety of bed and breakfast places to stay. These are listed on the Highland County Chamber of Commerce website.
The weekend will begin at Lisa’s place at 9:00 am. (Directions will be provided for those that plan to attend.) From there, the group will go to the Laurel Fork Sapsuckers maple syrup makers where we will bird for the morning. The owners of that business are offering to fix us lunch for $15 if desired. We will then head back to Lisa’s place to bird around her property and the Blue Grass Valley. On Lisa’s property you will get good looks at Red-headed Woodpeckers, Bobolinks, and Meadowlarks. Around 5:00, we will have a cookout on Lisa’s barn porch. Hamburgers and veggie burgers will be provided, as well as beer, wine, lemonade and tea. We are asking participants to bring side dishes.

On Sunday we will meet at Lisa’s at 9:00 AM with donuts and coffee. We will then explore one of two private properties along the Allegheny Ridge with John Spahr leading. In between those properties, in this special high-elevation habitat, there is a Nature Conservancy property. Stands of native red spruce are breeding grounds for Yellow-rumped, Magnolia, and Blackburnian Warblers, as well as Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, and Red Crossbill. We might have some luck and get a Northern Goshawk. In the mixed and hardwood forests, we should find Winter Wren, Veery, Hermit Thrush, Least Flycatcher, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and possibly Mourning Warbler.

John Spahr will be scouting the two sites in advance to determine which property we will go birding. Both locations offer level-to-hilly walking on old logging trails, but there are no toilet facilities at either one. Most of the birding will be short forays that stay in sight of the vehicle. We can also go to Bramble Hill, only five miles away from Lisa’s, on either Saturday or Sunday to see the Golden-winged Warblers.

Please respond by May 23rd if you are interested and what days you plan to attend. We look forward to a fun weekend with fellow birders in this magical part of our state.

by Linda Matkins
linda.matkins@gmail.com

UPCOMING FIELD TRIP(S)

Friday, May 20th: Ramsey’s Draft and vicinity
Meeting place and time: Mountain Home picnic area parking lot, 8:30 AM (about 20 miles northwest of Staunton on Rt. 250)
Coordinator: Andrew Clem, agclem@comcast.net or 540-849-8234

We will walk around the picnic area, and then hike for about a mile or so uphill along the Road Hollow trail. Warblers and other neotropical migrants are often seen in this area during the spring and summer months. Time permitting, we may stop at one of the locations near Braley Pond on the way home. In case of rain, the makeup date will be Saturday, May 28th.

NOTE: Other field trips will take place later this month and/or in June, so please check our website for late updates!

www.augustabirdclub.org/Field_trips.php

RAPTORTHON 2022 SUMMARY

On May 11, the Rockfish Gap Hawk Watchers team (Vic Laubach, Penny Warren, Rich Wood, and Ezra Staengl) conducted our 10th annual Raptorthon to raise funds for the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) and our local Rockfish Gap Hawk Watch. We spent the day birding in Highland and Augusta Counties, ending up with 98 species total, including 15 warblers and 7 raptors (Barred Owl, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Kestrel, and Cooper’s, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks). The weather was beautiful: sunny all day with light breezes and gradually warming in the afternoon.

After a two hour drive, we arrived at our first destination, Paddy Knob on the border of Highland County and West Virginia, a little after sunrise, and we were quickly immersed in an avian symphony! This was the highlight of our day! A large group of Least Flycatchers welcomed us immediately, joined by Blackburnian, Black-and-white, and Chestnut-sided Warblers. The drive up to Paddy Knob was filled with birds including thrushes (Veery, Hermit, Wood, Swainson’s), vireos, Sapsucker, Barred Owl, Red-shouldered Hawk, Ruffed Grouse, and lots more warblers: Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Cape May, Redstart, Ovenbird, and Northern Parula. On several occasions we got brief views of a silent flock of birds that quickly passed overhead, but never got clear IDs; we strongly suspect they were Red Crossbills, however.
Up near the lookout tower in West Virginia we reached our primary destination: a small area where Mourning Warblers are known to breed. We quickly heard one singing, and we eventually got close for great views and photos. We then heard two more singing nearby. A little further down the road, we had a close encounter with a singing Canada Warbler. Overall, Paddy Knob revealed 43 species to us.

We then headed north and made our way to Monterey and Blue Grass, eventually arriving at Bramble Hill at the northern border with West Virginia, a known breeding area for Golden-winged Warblers. We searched and searched but ended up with only a faint, distant song that we couldn’t definitively identify (Golden-winged, Blue-winged, hybrid?). Although we couldn’t celebrate a bona fide Golden-winged Warbler, we did celebrate Rich Wood’s birthday with cupcakes!

Highlights elsewhere in the Blue Grass area included Spotted and Solitary Sandpiper, Green Heron, Wood Duck, Osprey, Cooper’s Hawk, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Kestrel, Red-headed Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, Bobolink, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Back in Augusta County by late afternoon, we added Wild Turkey, Savannah Sparrow, Mockingbird, Warbling Vireo, Willow Flycatcher, Worm-eating Warbler, Mallard, Killdeer, and Carolina Chickadee. We missed some expected birds such as Great Blue Heron, Grasshopper Sparrow, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Blue Grosbeak. The oddest (and saddest) discovery of the day was an intact Killdeer nest with 4 eggs that was completely submerged in water. Just three days ago the nest and eggs were quite dry just 3 feet from the water’s edge of a lake that was being filled. The Killdeer pair remained close by but helpless.

Overall, we had a wonderful day birding together for our Raptorthon! We’re thrilled to report that we surpassed our goal of raising $2,000 in donations! We all give a big thank you to everyone who supported us! If you forgot, there is still time to donate at our Raptorthon page:


by Vic Laubach
laubach@virginia.edu
(434) 249-2927

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

On Wednesday, May 11, a field trip to McCormick’s Farm was conducted with four members of Augusta Bird Club in attendance. I’m sorry to say that this trip
failed to be publicized due to the newsletter not issued at the usual time. A beautiful day resulted in 52 species being recorded. The Warbling Vireo and Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, along with the Solitary Sandpipers, Swamp and Lincoln’s Sparrows were the birds most enjoyed, along with the Green Heron that showed up in the parking lot as the trip was concluding.

by Jo King

On the morning of April 26, six ABC members (Ann Cline, Allen Larner, Chris Siron, Lynne Parks, Tom Roberts, and I) birded Bell’s Lane. It started out as a nice day but after walking a mile or two, the humidity set in pretty quickly. We tallied 53 species which is a good morning on Bell’s. A few highlights were Spotted Sandpiper, Cormorant, Green Heron (thanks, Lynne, for summoning that one!), Osprey, Kingfisher, Kingbird, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Savannah Sparrow, and really great looks at Baltimore Oriole (thanks, Allen, for that great spotting), and Orchard Oriole. Two Yellow Warblers were heard but not seen. As always, I thank my fellow birders for a great morning of birding. Happy Spring Migration!

by Penny Warren

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by Sandy Lyon

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The membership of the ABC has grown by 30 members to 167 over the past two years. Perhaps this is in part a result of deciding not to collect dues in 2021. In 2022 we did reinstate dues, and to date about 40 members have not paid dues. I will be sending out reminder notices over the next few weeks. If you get such a notice by mistake, just let me know, and forgive me. Dues are $15 (individual), $25 (couple), and $30 (family). You can send payments and any updates to your contact information to:

Augusta Bird Club
305 Baldwin Drive
Staunton VA 24401

You can also check your status via email at mgibbons49@yahoo.com. Thanks!

Martha Gibbons
Membership Chair

TWO NOVICE BIRDERS IN TWO HOURS

On May 5 I invited my friend Bonnie Rhyder over to our farm in Lone Fountain, near Churchville. We watched the bird feeder for two hours from our back porch. She with her Nikon and me with my bird book, and this is what we saw:

- Rose-breasted Grosbeak (M)
- Rufous-sided Towhee (M & F)
- Indigo bunting (M)
- Brown thrasher
- Pileated woodpecker
- Plus many common birds: finches, chickadees, sparrows, titmice, and cardinals.

by Sandy Lyon

Photos courtesy of Bonnie Rhyder.

Magnolia Warbler (male) along Bell’s Lane, May 9.
Baltimore Oriole (male) along Bell’s Lane, May 9.

AUGUSTA BIRD CLUB MINUTES

April 11, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 by President Jack Holt.

Recent Sightings: Vesper Sparrows, Chipping Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, Cooper’s Hawks, Screech Owl and Kestrel nests in Highland County, Purple Martins, and Sandhill Cranes (Nebraska).

Bird Walks: McCormick’s Mill is scheduled for 4-13-22 led by Jo King.

Earth Day: Barbara Holt is coordinating our booth on 4/23 at Carolyn Moor’s farm on Bell’s Lane.

Big Spring Day: April 30th. Allen Larner is coordinating.

Riverfest: April 30th. Unless we get volunteers there will be no booth this year.

Highland County Birding/Campout: Scheduled at Lisa Hamilton’s home June 11-12. You can come for the day and/or campout. You will get access to places not normally available. If possible, John Spahr will be banding nestling Kestrels.

Friends of the Middle River float Trip: The club has been invited to a float/picnic with the FOMR on May 7th. Let Ann Cline know if you will attend.

May Meeting: The club will meet 5/21 from 8:00 – 10:00 at the Humpback Rocks Picnic Area on the Blue Ridge Parkway for a bird walk and potluck brunch.

Election of Board Members: The following members were unanimously elected to next year’s ABC Board: Rich Wood, president; Vic Laubach, vice-president; Marilyn Nash, secretary; Mona Bearor, treasurer, and Andrew Clem, editor.

Program: Former ABC member and Virginia Tech entomology professor Doug Pfeifer gave a presentation entitled, “Tree Swifts and Temples: Birding in Cambodia.”

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Nash, Secretary

TREASURER’S REPORT
submitted by Lisa Hamilton
03/01/2022 – 03/31/2022

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TOTAL BALANCE ALL FUNDS - 03/31/2022 $32,403.37

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

Augusta Bird Club website:
www.augustabirdclub.org

Virginia Society of Ornithology
www.virginiabirds.net