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 Newsletter of the
Piedmont Bird Club
 PO Box 38833
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PBC Field Trip Report

Augusta and Highland County, VA January 15 -18, 2010

by George Wheaton

On the afternoon of January the 15th, 11 members of the Piedmont Bird Club (PBC) braved predictions of torrential rain – to be followed by “a wintry mix” – and traveled north to Staunton, VA. On the morning of January 17, eight of the group continued west to Monterey, VA and the Blue Grass Valley. Thus began the PBC’s third winter outing to this region of VA’s northwestern Mountains and Valleys.

Each winter visit to this area brings its surprises. This year it was the “balmy” weather. We birded in chilly temperatures and light breezes on Saturday and admired our local guide birding in a short-sleeved shirt! The heavy rains came Saturday night but tapered off to intermittent drizzle on Sunday, finally stopping by Sunday afternoon. Temperatures stayed above freezing. Monday was glorious. Heavy clouds gave way to brilliant blue sky and unseasonably warm temperatures. This was a dramatic change from the preceding month when deep snow (30 to 36 inches) was followed by a prolonged period of bitterly cold weather.

Local birders told us that the weather had affected their birds. Fewer species were being seen and the number of individual birds was down.

Nevertheless, with several pairs of very bright eyes and persistence, we were able to identify 67 species (see attached list), including several of our targets.

As he did on our past trips, our local guide in Staunton delivered breathtaking views of a Barn Owl and found us our one and only Cackling Goose (Richardson’s subspecies). We sorted through a flock of Horned Larks numbering in the hundreds but did not find a hoped for Lapland Longspur.

The Blue Grass Valley supplied our wanted raptors. Although Red-tailed Hawk numbers seemed to be down from previous years, we did find, after quite a bit of searching, our target species. We came across five Bald Eagles (adult, subadults, juvenile). We had stunning looks at a minimum of five Rough-legged Hawks (three dark-phase and two light-phase birds). We had them perched (showing off their feathered legs), in flight, and hovering. Arguably the best bird came last. Thanks again to bright eyes and good local information, we were able to tally three adult Golden Eagles. These majestic raptors rule the roost in the Blue Grass Valley and its surrounding mountains.

Bird The BioBlitz!

Watch birds, have fun, learn, teach, and contribute to science all at the same time! How is that possible? Be a part of the Fun BioBlitz on May 15th that's being organized by the T. Gilbert Pearson (Guilford County) Chapter of the National Audubon Society. Piedmont Bird Club is a partner.

PBC members are invited to be part of the bird team that will join other wildlife watchers for a day of fun and education to identify as many species of plants and animals as possible in a park on Saturday, May 15, 2010. Lynn Moseley will be organizing the birding portion of the BioBlitz.

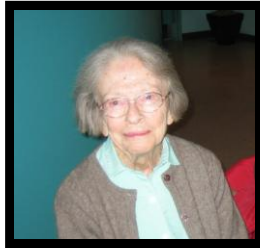
The Fun BioBlitz is designed as a learning event. Throughout the day, experts in nearly every wildlife category will lead groups of participants with all levels of experience on walks of approximately two hours in length to record everything from birds and butterflies to wildflowers and trees.

Participants may change groups as often as they wish in order to cover the wildlife groups that interest them. The morning will start early with a birding group, and other bird groups will go out later in the day. Throughout the day, groups also will record insects, native plants, and other wildlife. For folks who wish to stay after dark, there will be groups identifying bats, moths and night-calling frogs!

Price Park has been chosen as the site for the Fun BioBlitz because of its rich variety of wildlife habitats, including forest, meadows, a meandering stream, and an adjacent lake. Specialists in all fields are needed to co-lead groups or act as informal teachers throughout the day, so if you have expertise in one or more plant or animal group, you can help. Volunteers also are needed for organizational activities. And anyone may participate in any group to learn more about things that interest them, of course. Participants at all levels of experience are invited to take part.

There's a lot going on in our area on May 15th because it's a great time to be watching wildlife. The BioBlitz will be a fun way to spend part of the day. To sign up as a group participant, to volunteer, to find out about co-leading a group, or for more information about the Fun BioBlitz, contact Craig Lawrence at craig.carolina@gmail.com or Dennis Burnette at deburnette@triad.rr.com.

In Honor of Jean McCoy



We will all miss Jean McCoy who passed away on January 11, 2010. She lived a long and full life and dedicated a lot of her time to the Piedmont Bird Club. She served as the President from 1961 - 1963 and again in 1998 - 1999. She was always available for service on various committees and had extensive birding knowledge gathered from her many world-wide travels.

As her memorial card reads: ". . . just like a little wren - cute as can be, small and perky. We love that generous smile, your mischievous eye, and the irrepressible sense of humor. A woman of quiet strength, practical dreamer, both artist and natural scientist. . ."

Sincerest sympathy to the family from the Piedmont Bird Club.

History Quiz

If you missed the last few meetings, here are some of the history trivia questions:

1. The treasurer for the Piedmont Bird Club from 1985 - 1990 was
 - a. Wyatt Earp
 - b. Darl Tipton
 - c. Drew Brees
 - d. Louis Armstrong
2. In 1988, the field trip chairperson was
 - a. Mark Catesby
 - b. Herb Hendrickson
 - c. John Muir
 - d. George Washington
3. In 1997, PBC entered the world of cyberspace with a website started by:
 - a. Etta Schiffman
 - b. John James Audubon
 - c. Charlie Campbell
 - d. The Rolling Stones

Answers: 1) B 2) B 3) C



Cold weather
birders at the
White Street
Landfill
Saturday
January 9, 2010