



# THE BECKHAM OBSERVER

BECKHAMBIRDCLUB.ORG  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

JANUARY 2021



*HAPPY 86th ANNIVERSARY*

*BECKHAM BIRD CLUB*

*JANUARY 11, 1935*

## **January 2021 Newsletter – message from the president**

Happy 2021, BBC members!!

As we head into a new year that we all hope will be a vast improvement over the one that just ended, it's time for the ritual of announcing good intentions in the form of annual resolutions. Here are a few that I actually intend to keep (hence, nothing about diet or exercise, or trying to develop a greater appreciation for the adaptability of starlings):

1. Pay attention to the birds around me every day, regardless of where I am or what I am doing.
2. Submit a checklist to eBird every day – whether it's a feeder watch, a field trip, or just a random raptor sighting along the Gene Snyder Freeway on my way to the big box store.
3. Do more home study in order to get better at birding, especially birding by ear.

4. Engage with any new birders I encounter in person or online – help them with identification, answer questions, and – especially – encourage them to join the BBC or their local bird club.
5. Reduce my carbon footprint in whatever ways I can.
6. Support protections for birds and habitat, and let my elected officials know that I do.
7. Get a COVID19 vaccination as soon as I can, because that's what it's going to take to get back to having normal field trips and meetings.
8. Finally figure out all the hundreds of settings on my camera.
9. Stop dithering and decide on a new pair of binoculars.
10. Bird more.

I look forward to seeing all of you as soon as we are able to resume something akin to normal activities. Until then, be safe, be well, and good birding.

Andrew Melnykovich

### **IT IS PAST TIME TO RENEW YOUR 2021 MEMBERSHIP.**

Go to the Beckham Bird Club website <http://www.beckhambirdclub.org/> and click on the membership tab at the top of the homepage. Everyone received a renewal notice by mail in November. **If you used Pay Pal don't forget to send an email to the club with name, address, phone numbers and email so the club can update the membership list. All life members should do the same.**

### **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT RESULTS**

**Louisville CBC** - It was a somewhat disappointing total of **84 species**, with *three* of those *pending review*. Highlights included a **Tennessee Warbler**, **Orange-crowned Warbler**, and **Swainson's Thrush**. We ran the table on woodpeckers and owls, and had good numbers for all the normal bird feeder species (we had no siskins, despite this being a strong irruption year; siskins can hardly be described as a "normal" occurrence most years), and had three Purple Finches. We only missed Fox and Savannah of the sparrows. Another delight was - count `em - **eight Merlins**. They were observed in six of the nine count circle sections - two of which had 2 Merlins! Duck diversity was a little low; we missed Wood, Black, Pintail, Bufflehead, Goldeneye, and Ruddy. Hooded was the only Merganser this



year. With all the Sandhill Cranes flying by the week of the count, it was a shame to have missed them on count day. Other water-bird misses were Common Loon and American Coot. Ring-billed was the only gull species observed. The big surprise in this year's CBC was the near absence of blackbirds. We had only 110 Red-Winged, 100 of which I saw on my way home, at a new hotspot I visited for the first time. The other ten birds were scattered through four other sections of the count circle. No cowbirds, grackles, or Rustys.

Nonetheless, we had a great turnout of birders on December 20 practicing safe and healthy COVID guidelines - for that and your strong efforts in the field, Thank You all very much! **James A. Wheat KYLO Compiler**

**Thanks to Pam Spaulding for the picture of the leucitic Robin that was seen on the Louisville CBC. Isn't it a neat looking bird? Editor.**

**Otter Creek CBC-** The Otter Creek CBC was conducted on December 26. Seven participants in 6 parties, braved, not the snowiest, but certainly one of the coldest counts in recent memory, starting out at 15 degrees and maybe getting into the low 40's, with an occasionally light wind and no discernible precipitation. I believe we ended up with 74 species, and 3 count week species, with the biggest highlight on the count that almost never was being 5 reported shrikes, probably representing at least 4 individuals based on time and location. Other highlights were American Black Duck, Eurasian Collared-Doves, a single American Coot, I think 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers, a decent showing of Phoebes, Brown Thrashers, I feel a good number of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 3 Brewer's Blackbirds, 2 Palm Warblers, all the expected sparrows. Misses were some common waterfowl (often missed on this count), House Wren, which it should have been a good year for, Pine Warbler, siskin, a few blackbird species, and no owls detected. Thank you to Brainard Palmer-Ball, James Wheat, Barbara Woerner, Meg and Steve Brown, and Asher Higgins who came all the way from Somerset to help us out; a truly collaborative effort. You made this a success. Good Birding, **Michael Autin, Compiler**

## **THE PAST YEAR OF BIRDING REMEMBERED**

Submitted by Jane Bell

January 1, 2020 – a new year is dawning. Visions of ducks and loons and little birds and huge birds and resident birds and visiting birds and migrants and rarities dance in our heads. What would the new year bring??? Even on this cold winter day so many birds were waiting to be counted. All over the city we go listing Common Mergansers, White-throated Sparrows, Ruby-crowned & Golden-crowned Kinglet. Bald Eagle, Surf Scoter, Barred Owl (Tried to stay incognito in the brambles, but we ferreted it out!), a simply super little Screech Owl who always greets us in Miles Park were just a few of birds that we found this day.

Searching high and low we would encounter so many beautiful birds during the month of January. We got so “wrapped up” in birding that we truly don't remember if it was cold or

balmy. We do remember however that our waterproof shoes failed the test miserably!! What is the prettiest woodpecker ever?? Check out the Red-heads at Harrods Creek. The lovely fluted call of the Hermit Thrush filled the parks and trails that we visited. Eastern Phoebes had forgotten to fly south – so there they are – freezing in the cold wind. Winter Wrens just so dang cute are busy doing whatever wrens do. Did you find the Fox Sparrows that inhabit many of these areas?

On January 6 we went to visit a very special bird that was staying the winter at a home in eastern Jefferson County. This sweet little bird was treated like a king being well taken care of by its foster parents. We hope you got to see the Western Tanager before it returned to its home in the west.

And you won't believe what I am going to tell you now. Two WARBLERS were great finds in January – An Orange-crowned and Northern Waterthrush.

Want to go with us as we travel down to Cecilia, KY to see the hundreds of Sandhill Cranes that feed in the corn fields there? Be sure to look for Eurasian Collared-doves in the town itself.

February rushed in to be a part of our efforts to find more and more birds. We are out almost every day walking here there and everywhere. A very rare bird turned up on the tenth – a Varied Thrush. BUT DARN!!! The bird must have been scared out of its wits when it saw the residents of the home where it landed as after a very short time it flew away never to be seen again. Only three birders saw it, but nice pictures verified its existence.

Walking the AT on February 23 we were alerted via cell phone to a really fantastic sighting, A Burrowing Owl was being seen in Allensville, KY. The first record ever for our state. Leaving the AT as fast our feet would let us, we hurried home grabbed a few goodies and off we went. Hope it comes back this winter.

By March Tree Swallows are returning and Yellow-crowned Night Herons are back in the nesting tree. The last of March saw the beginning of spring migration. So GLORIOUS as, yes, winter is slowly disappearing. As the month progresses and April arrives, Warblers, vireos, shorebirds, flycatchers, to name a few begin to arrive.

A Sora appeared in Beckley Creek, WILSON'S PHALAROPE at Putney Pond. The woods, trails and bodies of water teemed with bird life. We wore ourselves out trying to go to all the hotspots. With masks on we met many birders at Cherokee Park one of those hotspots. What fun!

STOP THE PRESSES!!!! APPEARING ON APRIL 30 A GOLDEN -WINGED WARBLER – lovely to behold.

A great find was a Bewick's Wren in Bowling Green. This bird is now rare in Kentucky, so we had to go. We traveled to the Daniel Boone National Forest to find the Swainson's Warbler and then at the very end of June we travel not once but twice to see a Barn Owl.

So, the year is half over and it has been a great year so far for us birders. But there is more to come. Just listen to some of the birds that turned up at the Falls of the Ohio – Lesser Black-backed Gull, Cattle Egrets, a Wood Stork, Snowy Egrets, Black Terns and White Pelican.



The best part of the year had to be for us the migration of the small passerines in the Fall. Birds were abundant on the AT, just so spectacular. One bird in particular seemed to outdo all the rest in number the Bay-breasted Warbler – don't think we have ever had this many before in the fall. It was just so great that you just didn't want to quit birding – legs aching, tummies growling, glaring sun, rain or fog couldn't stop the intrepid birders.

Come late September many winter residents started to appear. How neat to have this a banner year for Siskins, Red-breasted Nuthatches (We have one coming to our feeder every day.), a great year for the banding of Saw-whet Owls, Purple Finches, and many different species of sparrows.



On Dec. 3 two Evening Grosbeaks turned up in our yard. But, darn again, they failed to stay more than a few short minutes. A most cooperative Western Grebe showed up on the Ohio River and stayed for several days and was seen by many birders. When we got the word of this rare species, we left our supper in the oven (turned it off) and out the door we flew. It was dark as we walked through Garvin Brown and Hays

Kennedy back to our car. Oh, what we won't do for our hobby of birding.

Our next outing to see a rarity was to Patoka Lake in Indiana. A Purple Sandpiper was so cute as it searched among the shoreline looking for breakfast. Yes, we do go out of our way to see SHOREBIRDS! A beautiful Snowy Owl was our next quarry. But you know what? We needed to borrow a telescope from the Palomar Observatory as the bird was out on the far side of the airport. A Harris Sparrow is coming to a feeding Station in Shelbyville. What a nice Bird of which to end my report with.

Although 2020 has been a troublesome year in many ways we have so enjoyed being outdoors and enjoying the wonders of creation. The birds have been great! Yes, we go forth almost every day. What a wonderful treasure hunt birding is. You just never know what may turn up.

Happy Birding in 2021.

## **BBC Conservation Report January 2021**

Read an encouraging report featuring Audubon's top 20 policy wins for birds in 2020, from the MBTA to individual state efforts:

[Top Wins for Birds in 2020: Policy | Audubon](#)

Check out this informative article on woodpecker drumming and calls, including audio files:

[Woodpecker Sounds of the U.S.: Drumming, Calls, and More \(abcbirds.org\)](#)

On a more disturbing note, Philadelphia experienced its largest mass bird collision event in 70 years, prompting conservationists to push for more bird-friendly communities.

[Philadelphia Sees Largest Mass Collision Event in the City in 70 Years | Audubon](#)

A heartening report spotlights how Lear's macaws are making a recovery effort in Brazil:

[Lear's Macaw | American Bird Conservancy \(abcbirds.org\)](#)

On the science front, European scientists are programming computers to distinguish patterns in bird plumage as the first AI tool capable of identifying individual birds in the wild.

[Artificial Intelligence to identify individual birds of a same species | EurekAlert! Science News](#)

Trumpeter swans are returning to the Nebraska Sandhills.

[Return of the Swans \(nwf.org\)](#)

As climate change forces species to move, scientists are tasked with identifying the new habitats and protecting them

[Road Map to Refuge | The Nature Conservancy](#)

And finally, 51 amazing winter bird photographs

[51 Best Winter Bird Photos - Birds and Blooms](#)

## **YOUR BIRDATHON DONATIONS AT WORK**

Dear Beckham Bird Club,

I wanted to share some good news with you and ask that you please share it with everyone else at the Beckham Bird Club.

**We are excited to announce that we have protected an additional 1,368 acres of the Pine Mountain Wildlands Corridor in Harlan County establishing the Warbler Ridge Preserve. The preserve combines this newly acquired tract with land protected in 2017, creating our largest preserve totaling 2,456 acres. This is one of the most unique conservation projects in our history.**

You can read the full announcement here: <https://knlt.org/news/warbler-ridge-preserve/>

We are very grateful for your ongoing partnership and support of our efforts.

Regards,  
Angie  
**Angie Allman**, Development Associate  
**Kentucky Natural Lands Trust**



**Even though we had to cancel our meetings and field trips because of the pandemic we hope you had a good year of birding. Hopefully as the year progresses, we will return to normal with meetings and field trips. Even though we can't bird together yet we hope you will put on your mask, social distance from everyone and get out on the birding trail and enjoy the outdoors and the many birds you will encounter. Happy New Year and good birding in 2021. What was your first bird of the new year?**