



THE BECKHAM OBSERVER

BECKHAMBIRDCLUB.ORG
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

AUGUST 2020

ALL BBC ACTIVITIES ON HOLD AT LEAST THROUGH AUGUST

COVID-19 update from the Board:

As you are aware, the coronavirus situation in Kentucky and neighboring states is getting worse, with numbers of new cases reaching record levels this month. It is impossible to predict when things will start improving.

Not surprisingly, St. Mark's Episcopal Church remains closed, so our meeting space is unavailable, and likely will remain so for at least the next month or two. Therefore, we will not be resuming meetings in August.

The board will decide soon whether to resume field trips this year and whether to cancel meetings through December. BBC members will be notified of the decision via the newsletter, website and email.

We are all anxious to resume meetings and field trips, but to do so now would be unsafe and unwise. It is much safer to enjoy the beauty of birds on your own, whether in the field or in your backyard.

Time at home is also an opportunity to improve your birding knowledge and skills. Review your field guides or brush up on birdsong identification by using a birding app or online database. The studying you do now will pay off once this is all over.

Contributions are still being welcomed to Birdathon. Conservation efforts continue even among the disruptions in our society, and the organizations in our community and our state still need your support. You can make a contribution by mail or via the BBC website.

Thank you.

THE BBC BOARD

CONSERVATION ACTION UPDATE

The Beckham Bird Club submitted the following comments regarding the Trump administration's proposed regulations that would weaken the Migratory Bird Treaty Act by allowing the activities of energy companies, developers and other commercial interests to lead to the "incidental" taking of birds that would otherwise be protected by law.

The Beckham Bird Club (BBC), a 501(C)3 organization in Louisville, KY submits these comments in OPPOSITION to the proposed regulations governing take of migratory birds. The BBC is a membership organization whose purpose is to promote conservation and protection of birds through education and field study. Its approximately 200 members participate in meetings, field trips and individual birding.

The BBC believes that weakening the MBTA through the proposed regulations would do incalculable and irreparable damage to populations of migratory birds, particularly those species that are already under pressure from habitat loss, climate change and losses from other causes. In recent years, studies by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and other scientific organizations, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Geological Survey, have documented significant declines in a wide range of species, notably tropical migrants such as wood warblers (Golden-winged, Cerulean, etc.). Overall, songbird numbers in North America have declined by as much as a third over the last half century. While habitat loss is a driving factor, other anthropogenic causes such as collisions with buildings and other structures, and a failure to control feral, non-native predators - mostly domestic cats - also have significant impact.

Weakening the MBTA to allow developers, energy companies and others to take unlimited numbers of migratory birds without fear of financial penalties or other consequences would greatly accelerate the decline in numbers of vulnerable species and could drive the most imperiled among them toward extinction. For more than a century, the MBTA has been a bulwark against heedless or reckless actions by commercial interests. It has served both to deter such actions and, as was the case in the Deepwater Horizon disaster, to penalize malfeasance that led to the deaths of protected species. The fines that have been levied in such cases have funded significant habitat restoration and other conservation efforts.

Now, when the global environment is on the brink of tipping into irreversible and catastrophic climate change, is the time to be strengthening, not weakening, environmental protections of all sorts. The effort to gut the MBTA is of a piece with many other such recent efforts which, when viewed in the aggregate, demonstrate a complete disregard for the wellbeing of future generations.

The BBC finds this and other such efforts to be unacceptable and states its OPPOSITION to the proposed regulation.

LOSE ONE – GAIN ONE

The newest supplement to the American Ornithological Society checklist is out and there are two changes that might affect your life list. The AOS has decided that the Northwest Crow is a “geographic trend” within the American Crow. So, you might have lost that on your list if you have birded in the northwest North America. But you have gained one if you have seen a Mexican Duck. After much consideration the Mexican Duck was split from the Mallard and is now a separate species. Did you gain one or lose one on your list?

Another controversial topic that is under consideration is to change the name of McCowan’s Longspur. McCowan was a general in the Confederate army during the Civil War.



THE 2020-2021 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP

One of the easiest ways that anyone can support bird habitat conservation is by buying Federal Duck Stamps - among the most successful conservation tools ever created to protect habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Federal Duck Stamps are conservation revenue stamps; 98 percent of the purchase price goes directly to help acquire and protect wetland habitat and purchase conservation

easements for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Wetlands acquired with Duck Stamp dollars help purify water, aid in flood control, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities.

As a birder one of the ways that your voice will be heard is to buy your stamp from the American Birding Association. You will also be showing your support for bird conservation in our national wildlife refuges. More information and how you can purchase your stamp can be found on the ABA website at aba.org. You may also purchase the stamp at the post office.

BBC Conservation Report August 2020

Social distancing in the animal world

Scientists found that ants (as well as lobsters and house finches) use social distancing to combat outbreaks of infectious diseases. When foragers, who collect food, are exposed to disease-causing fungus, they spend more time away from the nest, while nurses, who tend the brood, move the brood deeper into the nest to protect the larvae. Scientists postulate that the ants may be able to detect spores

on other ants as well as their own bodies and can then act to protect the rest of the colony.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/animals-use-social-distancing-to-avoid-disease1/>

Burrowing Owls on Marcos Island

Burrowing owls on Marco Island in Florida are thoroughly suburbanized and hundreds of pairs occupy burrows dug in empty lots, front yards, and strip mall parking lots. Habituated to humans, these smaller and more darkly pigmented subspecies are easily encountered. These birds take plenty of non-native prey such as geckos, anoles, and Cuban tree frogs. Not long ago, developers and property owners destroyed nests and owls, but citizen scientists, Owl Watch, now monitor and protect the owls. <https://www.facebook.com/OwlWatchFL/>

Crane News

At least three whooping crane chicks hatched in Louisiana this spring remain alive, including one that is nearing fledging. Louisiana's current whooping crane population stands at 75 not counting the three chicks.

<https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/news/three-whooping-crane-chicks-hatched-this-spring-remain-alive-in-ldwfs-reintroduction-project?bblinkid=232017896&bbemailid=22891950&bbejrid=1564286194>

Birds and Native Berries

Scientists studied seeds extracted from bird excrement and found that even when fruits of invasive plants are abundant, migratory songbirds seek out native berries. This doesn't mean they don't eat non-native berries, but native berries are more likely to provide the nutrients needed by the birds. A link to native plants is also included below.

https://www.audubon.org/news/migratory-birds-native-berries-best?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-x-engagement_20200624_eng-email_5baudience%5d&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_20200624_eng-email&utm_content=%5baudience%5d&emci=426c5d75-d5ba-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&emdi=31f57f73-9bbb-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&ceid=1314690

<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants>

Puerto Rico's Elfin-wood Warbler

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has [designated](#) more than 27,000 acres [of critical habitat for the Elfin-wood Warbler](#), one of the Puerto Rican species threatened by habitat loss and hurricane destruction.

https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/27488-acres-critical-habitat-designated-elfin-woods-warbler-2020-06-29/?utm_source=eeo&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=eeo1043&utm_term=EndangeredSpecies&emci=0265995b-debb-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&emdi=77272354-85bc-ea11-9b05-00155d039e74&ceid=453160

Poor Wood Stork Nesting in South Florida

Wood Storks did not have a banner nesting season at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, or anywhere in South Florida this year. This year's Wood Stork nest failures were probably due to an unusual timing of rainfall in an ecosystem that is already stressed by development and habitat loss.

<https://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/20200619/scores-of-wood-stork-nestlings-starve-to-death-are-eaten-by-vultures-after-heavy-rains?emci=6badefdb-88c3-ea11-9b05-00155d03bda0&emdi=c65709f7-97c3-ea11-9b05-00155d03bda0&ceid=1314690>

Congress Moves Toward Making Federal Buildings Bird-Safe

<https://abcbirds.org/article/Bird-Safe-Buildings-Act-Passes-US-House-of-Representatives?omhide=true&eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=ecadafc4-ebfb-4fcb-9525-a6f6a389b5e3>

Returning Petrel Signals Conservation Success

The first Hawaiian Petrel translocated and fledged from a Hawaiian refuge has returned to breed. The first of 87 birds translocated as chicks and fledged from the protected haven of Nihoku at Kīlauea Point National Wildlife Refuge has returned after several years at sea.

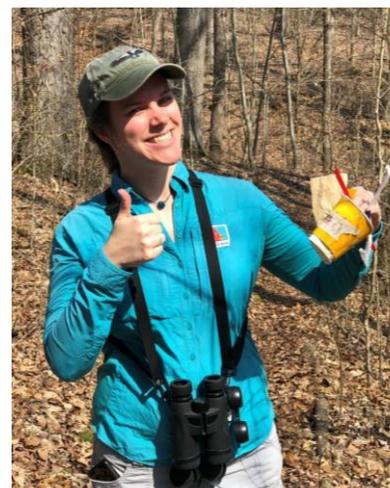
<https://abcbirds.org/article/hawaiian-petrel-returns-2020?omhide=true&eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=ecadafc4-ebfb-4fcb-9525-a6f6a389b5e3>



“Plirding?! What’s that?!”

Inspired by *plogging* (which encourages joggers to pick up litter while jogging), *plirding* is picking up litter while *birding*! There’s a million ways you can do it without it interfering with your regular birding... and imagine the difference we could make if every birder picked up just a handful of trash on every bird walk!

While we certainly didn’t invent the idea, my boss Ray (the host of the radio show and podcast *Ray Brown’s Talkin’ Birds*) came up with this silly-sounding word, and wanted to use our voice on the show to encourage *birders* to become *plirders*. I found myself brainstorming with all kinds of birdy people, and collected lots of plirding strategies on our website. There you can find a whole lot of ideas to morph from a regular *birder* into a *plirder* as an individual, if you’re a leader of a bird walk, for bird clubs, nature centers and even organizers of bird festivals. Please check it out: <https://www.talkinbirds.com/plirding> There’s also information about what litter to focus on to have the biggest positive impact on birds. (Spoiler: fishing line, lead tackle, balloons and anything plastic.)



Cheesy me plirding at Saunders Springs Nature Preserve, Radcliff, KY in early spring. It’s as easy as picking up a handful of trash on the way back to the car!

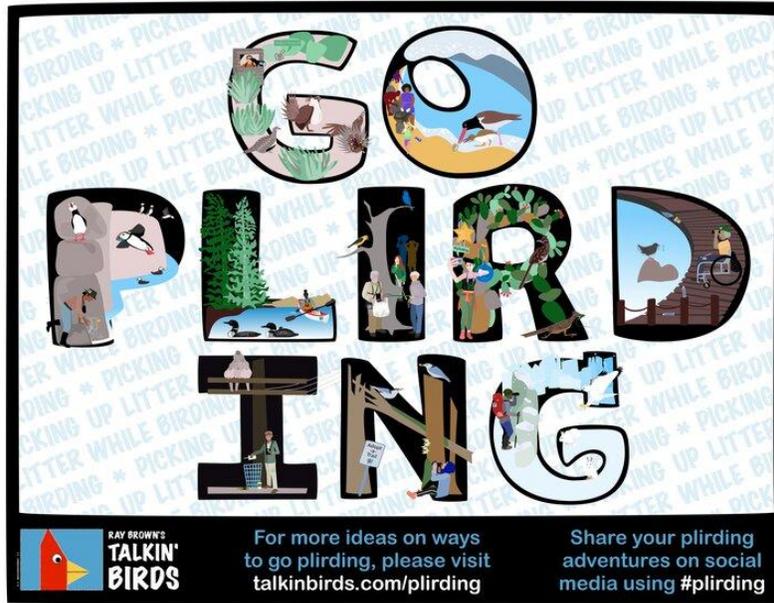
COVID-19 has tried to put a spanner in the works, and certainly you should use your discretion when plirding at the best of times.

Using gloves, a long-handled trash-grabber or hand sanitizer should solve most concerns.

If you’d like to hear the launch, I was the ‘special guest’ on the show (eek!) on Sunday 12th July – you can have a listen through a podcast app or at <https://www.talkinbirds.com/archive> (just scroll down a little). And coming up on Sunday 26th July, we’ll have Beckham Bird Club member Donovan Jones on the show, talking about the super neat feeder cam he’s been using, which identifies birds using artificial intelligence – so have a listen!

We’re very much hoping that this idea of plirding spreads far and wide, and one of our listeners created the above infographic to help us with this. On our Plirding website, you can download it (and a few other versions of it too), to share on your social media, or print out to hang up at a nature center, or any other use you can think of! So please feel free. Let’s go plirding!

– Freya McGregor, Beckham Bird Club member and Outreach Coordinator for *Ray Brown’s Talkin’ Birds*. Say hi at freya@talkinbirds.com



Plirding is picking up litter while birding! Anyone can be a plirder and help make a difference for birds; find a way that suits your birding style from some ideas on our [plirding website](#), and let's go plirding!

[Ray Brown's Talkin' Birds](#) is a radio show and podcast about birds, bird watching and conservation. Subscribe as a podcast or [listen live online](#), and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)!

YOUR BIRDATHON MONEY AT WORK



Dear Beckham Bird Club,

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

We are excited to announce that we have protected another 83 acres of the Pine Mountain Wildlands Corridor. The latest acquisition is an addition to our Laden Trail Preserve established in 2019 in Harlan County. The preserve protects vital forest habitat, as well as the viewshed of the Laden Trail, the most scenic driving route over Pine Mountain, and the proposed route of the Great Eastern Trail.

See the attached map and read the full announcement here: <https://knlt.org/news/laden-trail-addition2020/>

Pine Mountain-Laden Trail area ~ photo by Bob Hower, KY Documentary Photographic Project

We wanted to share the news with you ahead of our public announcement coming later today. These conservation successes are made possible by our loyal donors and key conservation partners. We are so very grateful for your ongoing partnership and support of our efforts.

Since we can't come together, I wanted to offer an opportunity to connect virtually via Zoom.

Our Executive Director, Greg Abernathy is setting up a "KNLT(ea)" this summer or early fall to talk more about these new projects. Let us know if you would be interested.

Regards,

Angie

Angie Allman, Development Associate

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust

Protecting, Connecting & Restoring Wildlands

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