Native Plants for Birds

By Larry Schwab

During the past half century, it has been estimated that North America has lost approximately three billion birds. That translates to an avian population decline of approximately 30 percent in North America alone. There are no reliable data available for the other six continents.

There are many factors responsible for this steep decline, including the major threats facing migratory species and songbirds. Those threats include fragmentation and disappearance of habitats, bird strikes on buildings and vehicles, residential and commercial development without regard to open space, loss to feral domestic cats, toxic chemical poisoning, predation by invasive species, global climate alteration, and a variety of other factors.

What can be done to stabilize the decline of our birdlife? We can support our national and international conservation organizations, yes, but what about in our own backyards, literally? One answer is to create attractive natural habitats in our open spaces and even on our own residential lawns. This may seem but a small effort in avian conservation, but taken collectively can contribute to the protection and stabilization of native bird populations. How can we contribute? Consider planting bird-friendly shrubs and other plants this autumn in support of birds, especially native songbirds whose populations are in decline. These plants can provide food and shelter for native birds. If you have some open space on an eligible and appropriate property, please consider introducing some bird-friendly native vegetation to that area. (An added benefit could be reducing the area of lawn that requires regular mowing.)

Check out the National Audubon Society’s Native Plants Database for a list of avian-friendly plants that are native to this area.

2021 Christmas Bird Count

By LeJay Graffious

Share the gift of nature this holiday season by participating with your family and friends in the 122nd Annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. More than 50,000 volunteers from all 50 states, Canada, Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and Pacific Islands count and record every individual bird and bird species seen in a specified area found during one 24-hour period in a designated circle 15 miles in diameter or about 177 square miles. Our count circle is centered on the Morgantown Airport. Nationally, birders have been participating in the event for more than century. Mountaineer Audubon had its first unofficial count in 1970. The first official count was held in 1984 with 54 species recorded. In recent years, the Mountaineer count has identified about 100 species with approximately 30 volunteers.

Locally, the CBC is holding its annual count on Saturday, December 18, 2021. We changed up our procedures last year due to COVID-19. We will update the procedures this year to meet current medical guidelines. The updates will be posted on the mountaineeraudubon.org website under the CBC tab, and on the Mountaineer Audubon Facebook page. Watch for special events on count day just for young birders.

LeJay Graffious will be coordinating the event again this year. Let him know if you would like to participate in the field or as a feeder counter at lejay@oldhemlock.org. He will enter you on an email list for updates and team assignments as the time draws nearer. (You will want to be sure to talk with LeJay or the sector leader in advance of the count day for any guidance on which areas to cover, the sequence of your coverage, or any bird questions.) This year’s event promises to be our most successful yet with more participants involved!

continued on page 4
Greetings once again, Mountaineer Audubon members! I hope that this newsletter finds you and your backyard birds in good health! Since I last penned the President’s Message in the previous newsletter, I spent much of my time conducting field research in the Monongahela National Forest in eastern West Virginia, with the help of some awesome field assistants. From mid-April to mid-August, we conducted surveys for game birds, breeding songbirds, and post-breeding songbirds. I had some exhilarating experiences with displaying American Woodcocks and curious Hermit Thrushes, got excellent looks at the many warbler species that breed in the Monongahela National Forest (but failed to get a nice photo of a Cerulean Warbler), and delighted in the adorably awkward-looking new generation of birds born this summer.

When not scrambling up and down steep slopes, disentangling myself from greenbrier and other thorn-bearing plants, or dealing with flat tires, I took some time to spearhead a Mountaineer Audubon project of which I am very proud… For anyone who missed our announcement earlier this summer, I’m excited to highlight the launch of our latest initiative in partnership with the Morgantown Public Library System --- Birding Backpacks! As of Monday, June 21, birding backpacks are available at all five branches of the Morgantown Public Library System. The birding backpacks contain a pair of children’s binoculars, a pair of adult binoculars, bird field guides, local birding tips, and trail maps. Just like a library book, they can be checked out for free for up to three weeks. They are intended for people of all ages, from kindergarteners to retirees. If you are in the region and know of any young or beginning birders who may not have their own set of binoculars, please spread the word! This initiative is also financially supported by (and would not be possible without) the Brooks Bird Club and Service League of Morgantown, so a big thank you to those organizations!

I’m pushing forward with two more projects this fall. First, we are working on an email listserv for Mountaineer Audubon members. We’ve done a trial run with the board members, which seemed to be a success, so now we are looking at expanding to all members and hope to have it up and running in September. Stay tuned! Second, I will be leading an initiative that follows the model of Birdability, a movement to make birding more inclusive and accessible. I’ll recruit a group of volunteers to provide key information pertaining to accessibility of local birding hotspots, such as the availability and type of restrooms, condition and substrate of trails, and existence of trail markers, interpretive signs, railings, benches, and/or viewing platforms. The goal is to provide more information about our popular birding locations, so that people with disabilities, mobility challenges, small children, or any other concerns know exactly what to expect when visiting and are able to confidently identify where they can go to enjoy birding!

Despite the still-present threat of COVID-19, Mountaineer Audubon has a fantastic line-up of fall activities and programs! For bird walks, we encourage mask-wearing and/or physical distancing for everyone and require it for those who are unvaccinated, and we ask you to take reasonable actions to avoid inadvertently spreading the virus, such as not carpooling with those outside of your social group and bringing/using hand sanitizer. For meetings, we will keep having virtual programs over Zoom, which also allows us to invite attendees from across the state. We thank you for your patience and cooperation as we continue to deviate from our usual operations in an effort to ensure the safety and health of our members!

Good birding,

Hannah Clipp

NOTE: There will be bonus content in the online version of the newsletter, which you can access from our website: http://mountaineeraudubon.org/
Fall 2021 Field Trips

All Mountaineer Audubon field trips are free and open to anyone. No birding experience is required, but a pair of binoculars will help (check out a Birding Backpack from the Morgantown Public Library System). Unvaccinated participants on our trips should wear masks, and social distancing should be maintained. If you have questions about any trips, please contact Field Trip coordinator Katie Fallon: katie@acawv.org.

September 11, 7:30am: West Virginia Botanic Garden. Join birder Derek Courtney as we bird by eye and ear in the many habitats of the WVBG. Bring binoculars and a bird guide if you have them. Free for WVBG and Audubon members. Please register in advance through the WVBG’s website: www.wvbg.org.

September 13, 7:30am: WVU Core Arboretum. This local hotspot provides birders with the opportunity to see many Neotropical migrants during fall migration. Meet at the entrance to the arboretum. Leader: Chris Rota.

September 25, 1pm: Hike on Dolly Sods led by LeJay Graffious. Meet at the Blackbird Knob trailhead at 1:00. The hike will be on rocky mountain trails and some off the beaten path. The hike will be approximately 3 miles with minimum stream crossings. Hikers are welcome to arrive early and visit the Allegheny Front Migration Observatory to observe the fall migration bird banding, which starts at sunrise and closes at noon (sometimes earlier in poor weather). The path to the banding station is opposite Blackbird Knob trailhead. For more information, email lejay@oldhemlock.org.

October 2, 12pm: Cooper’s Rock State Forest. Join Katie Fallon on the main overlook at Cooper’s Rock to watch for migrating raptors. This will be a “sit” rather than a walk. All ages welcome.

October 11, 8am: WVU Core Arboretum. This local hotspot provides birders with the opportunity to see many Neotropical migrants during fall migration. Meet at the entrance to the arboretum. Leader: Chris Rota.

October 17, 10am: Young Birders Walk, West Virginia Botanic Garden. Young birders of all ages are welcome to join us on this flat, slow-paced walk on the garden’s trails. Register in advance: www.wvbg.org. Leader: Katie Fallon.

November 8, 8:30am: WVU Core Arboretum. This local hotspot provides birders with the opportunity to see many Neotropical migrants during fall migration. Meet at the entrance to the arboretum. Leader: Chris Rota.

November 20, 8am: Cheat Lake Waterfowl Trip. Join Mountaineer Audubon and trip leader Derek Courtney for a tour around Cheat Lake, one of West Virginia’s most productive areas for waterfowl viewing. The trip will involve minimal level-ground walking at most stops. Wind can make Cheat Lake quite cold on occasion, so participants should dress appropriately. We will meet at Ruby and Ketchy’s restaurant in Cheat Lake at 8am and will drive to the locations. Participants may also arrive earlier at 7am if they wish to have breakfast at the same location. Leader: Derek Courtney.

January 15, 5:30pm: Owls of the Garden. Join Mountaineer Audubon’s Derek Courtney and Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia’s Katie Fallon for a winter owl walk. The program will begin with a short presentation featuring live owls from the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia followed by a walk in the WVBG in search of wild owls. Dress warmly and bring a flashlight. Free for WVBG, ACCA, & Mountaineer Audubon members, $15 for non-members.

Special Event:

September 15, 7pm (Part One, Online) AND September 18, 5-6pm (Part Two, In Person): Bird Photography Workshop with Mollee Brown. Bird photography is a fantastic way to capture memories for yourself — and to share the beauty of birds. This interactive workshop is designed for bird enthusiasts and beginner to intermediate photographers who want to capture fantastic bird photos. We’ll look at everything from camera options and settings to using birding skills that you already have (whether you know it or not!) to take photos that make you feel like you are right there with the birds. We’ll also cover how to use habitat, weather, and time of year to your advantage, with a special focus on locations in north-central West Virginia. After a recorded online portion of this workshop, we’ll head to an in-person event at the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia’s new Outdoor Classroom in Cheat Lake to photograph a several of their non-releasable educational birds as well as subjects we find nearby. Participants are suggested to make a donation to ACCA to help care for the ambassador birds we will be photographing. Please email Katie (katie@acawv.org) to register and for directions to the Outdoor Classroom.
Fall 2021 Programs

Our virtual fall programs are free and open to the public -- everyone is welcome! Zoom invitation links will be sent to Mountaineer Audubon members through our soon-to-be-instated email listserv. A Zoom link may also be requested via email: info@mountaineeraudubon.org.

September 14, 7 pm -- Richard Bailey: Introducing the Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in West Virginia, a primary tool for bird conservation in the Mountain State

About the program: This presentation will: (1) briefly summarize how the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources organizes and pursues its conservation goals, with a focus on the State Wildlife Action Plan; (2) provide background on the first Breeding Bird Atlas as well as a tour of all sections of the new book, with emphasis on interpretation of results, how the results inform bird conservation, and personal reflections from 10 years of working on the project; and (3) a brief discussion on how, in coming years, birders in the state can look beyond birding as a simple recreational pastime to include assisting with critical conservation work.

About the speaker: Richard Bailey is the State Ornithologist and oversees the bird program for the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

October 12, 7 pm -- Joanna Wu: Avian ecology with the National Audubon Society

About the program: This presentation will cover some of Joanna’s ornithology-related work, which ranges from climate modeling with the National Audubon Society to female bird research.

About the speaker: Joanna Wu worked as an avian biologist at the National Audubon Society since 2016 and was one of the scientists behind the 2019 Birds and Climate Change project.

November 9, 7pm -- Ethan Barton: Avian diseases in West Virginia

About the program: This presentation will cover the mysterious avian disease that has been killing birds in the mid-Atlantic states, with the latest updates for West Virginia, as well as other bird feeder-transmitted diseases and the importance of maintaining bird feeder hygiene.

About the speaker: Ethan Barton is a West Virginia Division of Natural Resources biologist specializing in wildlife diseases. He has been in service with the agency since 2016, working mostly in the state’s Eastern Panhandle region.

December 14, 7 pm -- Birds and beyond: A conversation with Lauren D. Pharr

About the program: From bird banding to Red-cockaded Woodpecker monitoring, there’s a ton that a researcher can study. Come learn about all the cool research that avian ecologist and science communicator Lauren D. Pharr has been doing at North Carolina State University. Other topics in this discussion will include the importance of science communication and representation for historically excluded individuals.

About the speaker: Lauren Pharr is an ornithologist, engaged science communicator, and Ph.D. student at North Carolina State University, pursuing her degree in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology.

2021 Christmas Bird Count

continued from page 1

Participants’ guide on what data to collect during your Christmas Bird Count:

1. Record every bird seen or heard in your assigned area, and only between midnight and 11:59 pm on your count date. 2. Try to cover your assigned route as thoroughly as possible during daylight hours. 3. Nocturnal birding or “owling” is optional. 4. Record all hours spent watching or listening for birds. 5. Record all miles traveled while watching or listening for birds (see guide to CBC party miles/hours for details). 6. Record each mode of transportation (by foot, by car, etc), and match the mode with # of hours and miles for each type. 7. Record hours watching at feeders separately from any birding in the field. 8. Record hours and miles “owling” (nocturnal birding) separately from any birding in the field during count day.
Science in the Scope: The Latest in Bird Research
By Hannah Clipp

Scientists are constantly making discoveries and seeking to unravel the mysteries of the universe, and bird scientists --- called ornithologists --- are no exception! However, it can be difficult to keep up with the most recent research results, and even more difficult to understand what they mean. Recognizing that dilemma, I created an ongoing article series that takes on recently published scientific papers and translates them into plainspoken language for a lay audience. My goal is to share scientific knowledge with you in an easily digestible manner. For this sixth article in my series, I’ve chosen to focus on a topic close to home for many of us --- birds living in or migrating through urban areas (towns, cities, etc.).

How we can help birds in towns and cities:

Turn off the lights!
In the spring and autumn, billions of our songbirds migrate at night, and millions of them end up dying when they hit buildings. Why is this happening? Outdoor lighting from streetlights and interior lighting from buildings may confuse migrating birds and draw them into areas with a lot of infrastructure, increasing the risk of accidentally flying into hard surfaces. In recent years, there have been many reports of mass collisions at brightly lit buildings in towns and cities during migration. In a recent study, scientists looked at 21 years of deadly collisions recorded at the McCormick Place Lakeside Center in Chicago, Illinois. They wanted to figure out what factors may be causing migrating birds to hit the building. It turns out that it is likely a combination of three things: migration traffic (how many birds are migrating on a given night), lighted window area (how many windows are lighted vs. darkened), and local weather conditions (mainly wind direction). More birds hit the building and died on nights when many birds were migrating, lots of windows were lit up, and winds were coming from the west and south. Based on these results, the scientists predict that decreasing the amount of lighted window area could reduce bird deaths by 60% --- turning off lights can save bird lives!

Reduce urban expansion and restore large forest patches!
Researchers from North Carolina conducted a study that spanned 71 cities in the southeastern United States and looked at the effects of different landscape factors on the number of bird species in an area. If we want to maintain many bird species in our cities, we need to know: How much does the amount of habitat types (e.g., forest, wetland, urban) in an area vs. the spatial arrangement of those habitat types (e.g., large vs. small or skinny vs. round patches) matter to birds? To answer that question, both are important. The amount of developed land in a city reduces the number of bird species. So does the amount of forest edge. To support bird species in towns and cities, we should therefore focus on restricting the expansion of developed land and reducing the edges of large forest patches, perhaps by planting trees.

Clean those feeders!
I came across a study that highlighted the importance of cleaning bird feeders to reduce the spread of avian disease, and I thought it would be timely to include here --- given the mysterious illness plaguing our bird friends this past summer and the accompanying directive to take down bird feeders. A small group of scientists from Arizona State University studied House Finches at two sites in Arizona, conducting a 10-week experiment comparing feeders that were cleaned daily with a 10% bleach solution vs. not cleaned. They hypothesized that feeder contamination would directly impact the disease status of visiting House Finches, and they were right --- partially. At their more rural site, male House Finches showed increased infection of a common avian disease called coccidiosis after visiting dirty bird feeders, and daily cleaning successfully decreased infections. But that was just at the rural site and just for males. There was no obvious difference at the more urban site on the college campus or for females, which leaves room for more exploration of why that may be. However, these results do indicate a clear health benefit to at least some birds from routinely cleaning feeders. Unlike us, birds can’t wash their hands to avoid spreading disease, but we can help them out by washing our bird feeders on a regular basis!
Mountaineer Audubon Annual Bird Seed Sale 2021

This year we will be working with Morgantown’s Wild Birds Unlimited store for our annual bird seed sale fundraiser. The store is located in the Suncrest Towne Center near the intersection of route 705 and Stewarts Town Road. Seed orders will be due by October 18, 2021. To simplify ordering, you can drop off or mail your form directly to the store. Checks can be made payable to Wild Birds Unlimited. The store’s address is 1074 Suncrest Towne Centre Drive, Morgantown, WV, 26505. Bird seed pickup will be at the store on November 4, 5, 6 from 10am-6pm or Sunday, November 7, from noon-3pm.

The following are descriptions of Wild Birds Unlimited bird seed products for sale.

No Shells: No-Mess LM (sunflower chips, peanuts, low millet) & No-Mess Plus Blend (Added fruit, calcium & Bark Butter Bits) — 100% edible blend to attract ALL birds with NO MESS. The unique No-Mess Blends feature seeds that have had their shells removed so only the meat of the seed is left. No hulls on the seeds makes for tidier feeding, since there’s no debris on the ground to clean up. Pound for pound, the No-Mess Blends may offer the best value, because you do not pay for uneaten seed waste. The birds eat everything. Great for use near flower beds, patios, and decks.

Includes Peanuts: Choice Blend — The Choice Blends are a combination of high-oil content seeds. The black oil sunflower, sunflower chips, shelled peanuts, safflower and striped sunflower attract a variety of birds, including chickadees, woodpeckers, titmice, nuthatches, and jays.

Excellent for Your Local Birds: Supreme Blend — Versatile blend for virtually every feeder, the Supreme Blends feature black oil sunflower, sunflower chips, safflower and striped sunflower in a combination that helps attract a wide variety of birds, such as chickadees, nuthatches, titmice, and wrens.

Sunflower-eating birds love it, blackbirds & squirrels do not: Safflower — Use Safflower as a problem solver. Safflower has a very hard outer shell which makes it difficult for Blackbirds, especially Starlings, to crack open, so they usually avoid this type of seed. The bitter taste can also discourage some squirrels. But it won’t deter Chipmunks.

Great Source of Energy: Premium Black Oil Sunflower — The Premium Oil Sunflower is a great source of energy for the birds and 99% free of sticks, stems or other foreign matter so your feeders won’t clog with debris. Oil sunflower has a high calorie/ounce ratio due to its high fat and protein content and its relatively thin shell. Among seed ingredients, oil sunflower attracts the greatest variety of small and large seed-eating birds.

Goldfinches’ Favorite Food: Nyjer — Nyjer® is a high oil content seed, making it an excellent energy source for active birds such as goldfinches, house finches, purple finches, and pine siskins. It is important to keep the food fresh for these picky little eaters. Nyjer has a thin shell and is vulnerable to spoilage while in the tube. Once seed starts to dry out and become stale, finches will turn up their beak for fresher forage.

Finches’ favorite: Finch Blend — Finches’ favorite! The Finch Blend includes Nyjer® and fine sunflower chips. It’s a favorite of goldfinches, house finches, purple finches, and pine siskins.

Peanuts in Shell: Peanuts in the shell are a high-protein, high-fat food enjoyed by birds such as chickadees, titmice, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and jays. They’re also a fun way to feed other backyard visitors including squirrels.

Peanut Splits out of Shell: Peanuts are a high-energy food enjoyed by a wide variety of birds including woodpeckers, titmice, nuthatches, chickadees, jays, and more. With the shells removed, they’re accessible to more species of bird. They’re 100% edible and are high in both protein and fat.

Suet Cakes:

Full of mealworms, various nuts and added calcium: Super Suet — The newest suet, packed full of protein & fat ingredients including mealworms, peanuts, almonds, pecans, walnuts, and calcium. This suet contains added protein and fat to help keep your birds warm during the cold winter.

Loaded with Peanuts: Naturally Nuts Suet — The Naturally Nuts® Suet is loaded with lots of yummy nuts that birds such as woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches love to eat. All suets are rendered and refined to remove impurities that cause spoilage.

Nut and Fruit Lovers’ Favorite: Nuts & Berries Suet — Loaded with peanuts, almonds, pecans and cranberries, Nuts & Berries is designed to attract, nut- and fruit-eating birds like woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, and more. All suets are rendered and refined to remove impurities that cause spoilage.

Full of Peanuts and Fruit: PB&J Suet — The PB&J Suet mimics the old childhood favorite, but without the sticky after-effects. The peanut butter appeals to birds that like insects and nuts, while the “jelly” (blueberries) attracts fruit-eating birds. Woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches, and others enjoy this high-energy food.
MOUNTAINEER AUDUBON CUSTOMER PURCHASE FORM

NAME_______________________________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS___________________________________________________________________________________

PHONE NUMBER_______________________________________________________________

EMAIL______________________________________________________________________________________

Order forms can be dropped off at the store or mailed to the store by Oct. 18, 2021. Checks can be made out to: Wild Birds Unlimited, 1074 Suncrest Towne Centre Dr Morgantown, WV 26505 by October 18, 2021.

Pick up will be at the store on November 4th, 5th, 6th 10 AM-6PM or Sunday, November 7th Noon-3PM. If you have any questions, please call the store (304) 241-4370. Thank you!

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TOTAL:
Getting to Know Mountaineer Audubon Leadership – Favorite and Furthest Birding Spots

By Hannah Clipp

In an effort to encourage members to get to know the leaders of Mountaineer Audubon a bit better, I put together a few questions focusing on our love of birds and birding.

Question 1: What is your favorite local birding location? (Local in this case means within the Mountaineer Audubon 7-county region)

**Hannah (President)** = Prickett’s Fort State Park (Marion County) and the West Virginia Botanic Garden (Monongalia County).

**Nari (Vice President)** = Little Indian Creek Wildlife Management Area, Monongalia County.

**Alan (Secretary)** = Deer Lake, a neighborhood near Chalk Hill, Pennsylvania.

**Vicky (Treasurer)** = Mon River Rail Trail.

**Katie (Field Trips and Fundraising Committee Chair)** = I can't pick just one favorite local birding location! My top three include Tom's Run Preserve; the Raven Rock Trail and vicinity at Cooper's Rock State Forest; the West Virginia Botanic Garden; and Cranesville Swamp. OK, that was my top four --- it's so difficult to narrow it down! And I forgot to include Cheat Lake Park, which certainly deserves to be included, too.

**LeJay (Publicity Committee Chair)** = My favorite birding is wherever I am at the moment. Being able to bird any place at any time is one aspect that drew me into birding. Otherwise, my favorite local places are seasonal. For spring migration, I like along the Monongalia River, such as at the West Virginia University Core Arboretum. Summer is on the backroads in Preston County. For fall migration, I head to the Allegheny Front on Dolly Sods and to Canaan Valley. My favorite winter birding is around Cheat Lake.

**Larry (Conservation Committee Chair)** = Nearly all of Preston County.

**Cheyenne (Education Committee Chair)** = My favorite local spot is Johnson Hollow --- it's pretty secluded but close to home. I can watch woodcock displays, hear whip-poor-wills, and explore warbler mania with berry picking at the same time.

**Chris (Student Committee Chair)** = West Virginia University Core Arboretum.

**Ella (Board Member)** = The Mon River and Deckers Creek Rail-Trails and Cheat Lake Trail.
Question 2: What is your favorite all-time birding location?

Hannah = Magee Marsh, Ohio. Because it sits on the southern shore of Lake Erie, it is a prime stopover site for songbirds during spring migration.

Nari = Ka’ena Point Trail in Kaena Point State Park, Oahu, Hawaii.

Alan = Costa Rica.

Vicky = Down East Maine Birding Festival was really nice.

Katie = I think my favorite all-time birding location is Reserva Natural de las Aves Reinita Cielo Azul (the Cerulean Warbler Bird Reserve) near the town of San Vicente de Chucuri in Colombia. Simply an incredible place to visit! I also love birding in the New River Gorge area of West Virginia. And I also should mention Hassayampa River Preserve near Wickenburg, Arizona --- a great place to visit next time you're in the Phoenix area. Oh, and Mitchell Lake near San Antonio, Texas. And the Salton Sea in south-central California. Clearly, I have a problem narrowing it down to one favorite place!

LeJay = My all-time favorite location is a toss-up between Costa Rica, Columbia, or Ecuador. Ecuador may have the edge with the trip into the Amazon Basin on the Napo River, high in the Andes for endemics, and sailing and hiking around the Galapagos Islands. Although I have visited many amazing birding locations in continental USA.

Larry = All of East Africa, and Tanzania and Kenya in particular.

Cheyenne = Probably the Magee Marsh region. There are always so many surprise birds showing up or unique bird encounters like Bald Eagles perched at individual ice fishing holes. This area is where I really learned how to bird as I grew up.

Chris = Southeast Arizona.

Ella = Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Eastern Shore of Virginia on Assateague Island.

Question 3: Where is the furthest birding location from Morgantown that you have visited?

Hannah = Denali National Park, Alaska.

Nari = Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary, outside Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India.

Alan = South Island of New Zealand.

Vicky = Nepal (the colorful kingfishers were great, although the hummingbirds in Costa Rica were pretty nice as well).

Katie = Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, India. It was an amazing place to visit -- full of egrets, storks, herons, and many other water birds. I hope to return someday and see everything I missed the first time.

LeJay = I enjoyed birding in the Tochigi Prefecture in Japan. I had the opportunity to birdwatch with local enthusiasts and the author of the local bird guide.

Larry = Himalayan Range in Nepal.

Cheyenne = Southern Iceland, watching Puffins on the basalt columns.

Chris = Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Ella = The island of Guam, where I worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on an endangered species study of the Mariana Crow and the Mariana Fruit Bat.
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