



# THE DRUMMER

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE  
RUSSELL COUNTY BIRD CLUB

Editor-Dave Worley

MEETINGS ARE THE 4<sup>TH</sup> TUESDAY  
AT THE LEBANON COMMUNITY ROOM  
AT 7:30 PM

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**HAPPENINGS:** The Great Backyard Bird Count is held on the weekend of February 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>. It is for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You count the birds in your backyard then submit the results to the Lab via the internet at <http://birds.cornell.edu/>. Even if you do not count, you should visit this web site. It is a great one for birding info.

Bob Riggs and Tom Hunter got out during the big freeze to look for hawks and eagles. Boy, did they get a treat, they found 5 Golden Eagles at Elk Garden and 2 at Clifton. One of the immature eagles was seen flying just above the ground, then it would plunge into the snow to catch its next meal. They found 13 Red-tailed and 2 Red-shouldered Hawks. They also saw a few American Kestrels.

An Eastern Screech-owl is roosting in a barn at Clifton. You need to see the antics of this owl when he sees you. It really puts on a show.

Dave Worley and Wallace Coffey spent Sunday February 6<sup>th</sup> birding together, they saw the Common Redpoll at John Shumate's house in Shady Valley, Tn. They then found the Harlequin Duck below Holston Dam and traveled on to Kingsport where they saw the Rufous Hummingbird. They spent several hours that evening looking for the Long-eared Owl that is visiting John Shumate, but no luck. The Redpoll was a life bird for Dave. They also saw American Widgeon and Buffleheads.

Bob Riggs told me that lots of Purple Finches and Black-capped Chickadees were driven down by the big freeze. The chickadees have left, but he is still seeing the finches.

Tom & Laverne Hunter were birding in the Clifton area on Saturday Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, about 6 pm they saw a Short-eared Owl near the double ponds and the black barn. No reports on it since then.

Bob & Diana Riggs recently had an Oregon Pink-sided Junco visit at their feeder for several days.

Bob Riggs and Dave Worley saw 23 White-crowned Sparrows in a brushy patch near the scale house at Elk Garden. A big number for such a small area.

**PRESIDENTS' CORNER:** The other day I was down on Moccasin Creek, Rt. 676, and I noticed an enormous flock of American Robins. Although it is common and abundant it is an interesting bird. It is our largest thrush, measuring up to 10 inches. I was amazed at the size of the flock, it seemed to stretch for over a mile on the south side of the ridge. The north side was still snow covered, limiting the available habitat. I assume this flock was driven south by the hard freeze to our north. Robins are short migrants and will gather in nomadic flocks, so if you see robins this time of year, they are part of a large flock. They forage the county side looking for wild grapes and berries. Here in Russell County they find them on the strip mine areas. They can cover a farm field in minutes. They will stay in an area until it freezes and the food runs out, then migrate southward. Our robins could stay the entire winter and be joined by the northern robins, creating a large flock like I saw on Moccasin, or they could migrate south and be replaced by the northern flocks. Most people seem to think that ours do migrate. Robins at one time were hunted for food, especially in the south. Even at a high price, they were in great demand. I do have to admit, I wondered how a few would taste. I guess I will never know, since they are now protected and hunting them is therefore illegal. Hey, get out there and do some bird watching. See you on the Burkes Garden field trip, or at the meeting. By the way, the meeting has been changed to the 29<sup>th</sup> of February.

Bob Riggs

**FIELD TRIP:** Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>, we will meet at the community room at 8 am, and proceed to Burkes Garden. Expect to see Golden Eagles, Bald Eagles and Rough-legged Hawks. Hey, if you are not interested in birding come for the tail gate party. Think about it, grilled sausage, hot cider and lots of birds. Be sure to dress warmly for this event, and if you are easily excited by raptors, better consider a sedative. Our very own **JUDY SETTLE**, has volunteered to give us a personal tour of property belonging to a local hunt club. Hope to see **you** there.

**MEETING:** Tuesday, **Feb. 29<sup>th</sup>**, 7:30 pm. Notice the date change. The program will be presented by Diana & Dave Worley. Since they will be showing video and pictures from their Hawaii birding trip, they ask that you dress Hawaiian. There will be a door prize for the best Hawaiian outfit, and maybe others.