

## *February 9, 2008 Trip Burke's Garden, Virginia*

On Saturday, February 9, 2008, several members of the Russell County Bird Club joined the Buchanan County Bird Club for a trip to beautiful Burke's Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia. Target birds for Burke's Garden in winter include eagles and Rough-legged Hawks. We would not be disappointed. Here is the report from BCBC President Roger Mayhorn with RCBC members indicated by an \* in the list of observers below.

Today, the 9th, twenty-two members and friends of Buchanan County Bird Club gathered to bird Burke's Garden in Tazewell County. The day's weather began with a crisp 37 degrees and beautiful sunshine. Black Ducks and Mallards were the first waterfowl encounters of the day at the entrance pond to the Garden.

The first surprising bird of the day was an adult Bald Eagle found perched on a dead snag near the stream not far from the pond. Eagle-eyed Tom Hunter spotted the bird, and within seconds another Bald Eagle was spotted on the ground nearby. The second eagle flew up to perch near the first giving everyone great views with binoculars and scopes.

As the day progressed Golden Eagles were spotted. At one time four Golden Eagles were observed in the air at once. Two of them were doing aerial courtship displays with diving and attempts at locking talons. The group finished the day with 10 Golden Eagles.

Red-tailed Hawks seemed to be everywhere with everyone hoping for a Rough-legged Hawk. Finally Tom Hunter got a look at one as it quickly disappeared. Later Mollie McCutcheon spotted a beautiful adult Rough-legged playing on the wind. With the bird flying and kiting with the mountain as a backdrop, the gray and white really stood out especially the white undersides where the bold black patches were in sharp contrast to the white under body and wings. Four Rough-legs was the high count for that species by the end of the day.

As the day advanced the wind began to pick up, and by noon, some of the gusts were strong enough to cause birders to stagger around as if they had been partaking of the grape a bit too much. Then again it may not have been the wind at all. It may have been the amusing antics of Don Carrier, Jerry Thornhill and Mollie McCutcheon as they did a life bird dance in the middle of the road, after having just gotten great looks at their first Rough-legged Hawk. There are photos to prove it (see them at <http://www.pbase.com/aquilaet/burkes2>).



Don & Jerry's Feeble Effort



Roger's Exuberant Show

After having lunch at the Garden's country store the group braved the wind and went in search of waterfowl. It wasn't long before several Teal and Mallards were found along a section of stream. Everyone got good scope views.

The BCBC was not the only group birding Burkes Garden today. Members of the New River Valley Bird Club and the Watauga Bird Club of North Carolina were also present to enjoy the scenery, the great birding and the great fun. It was a day to remember.

Observers: **Don Carrier, Peggy Herbert, Tom & Laverne Hunter\*, Marie Miller, Mollie McCutcheon Grady & Ann McRae, Fred & Janice Martin\*, Roger & Lynda Mayhorn, David Raines, Ed & Mary Talbott, Ed & Michelle Talbott, Jerry & Jane Thornhill\*, Allen & Mindy Waldron, Dave Worley\***

Below is the complete list of 40 species found in the Garden today.

Roger Mayhorn  
Compton Mt

Golden Eagle 10	Mallard 49	White-breasted Nuthatch 5
Bald Eagle 2	Hooded Merganser 1	Carolina Wren 1
Rough-legged Hawk 4	Great Blue Heron 5	American Goldfinch 21
Red-tailed Hawk 17	Belted Kingfisher 2	Eastern Meadowlark 7
Red-shouldered Hawk 1	Killdeer 8	Horned Lark 55
Cooper's Hawk 2	Wild Turkey 2	American Robin 1
Sharp-shinned Hawk 1	Turkey Vulture 1	Eastern Bluebird 6
American Kestrel 6	Black Vulture 2	Song Sparrow 3
Northern Harrier 1	Mourning Dove 10	Dark-eyed Junco 1
Common Raven 27	Rock Pigeon 49	House Sparrow 30
American Crow 200+	Northern Cardinal 1	Red-winged Blackbird 10
Canada Goose 2	Blue Jay 2	European Starling 800
Green-winged Teal 17	Red-bellied Woodpecker 2	
American Black Duck 14	Downy Woodpecker 1	