

Russell County Bird Club
Field Trip Report
January 23, 2012
Forty Foot/Mountain Road/Stuart's Pond/Corn Valley/Clifton Farm

Ten people (Michael Sanders, Roy Knispel, Tom Hunter, Dave Worley, Ted Dinger, Sharon Dinger, John Kelly, Sheri Hiter, Jane Thornhill, & Jerry Thornhill) hit the field on a beautiful winter morning to find birds. They were not disappointed. Almost immediately, Trip Leader Tom Hunter radioed finding a Cooper's Hawk perched in a tree along Big Cedar Creek. The hawk provided good looks at the white tail tip which showed the rounding found in Cooper's.

Jane spotted a Loggerhead Shrike near Forty Foot where shrikes are usually found on this trip. Unfortunately, the bird flew before anyone else had a chance to see it. Desperate to redeem herself, she found a second bird on the hillside just before the intersection of Elk Garden Road with Hayters Gap Road. This bird proved to be much more cooperative posing and then flying nearer for even better looks. This was a life bird for John & Sheri.

Peggy's owl was right where it was supposed to be, and a Rough-legged Hawk made an appearance in the distance from Stuart's Pond. Sharp-eyed Mike spotted the hawk and veteran hawk watcher Tom confirmed the ID. A surprise Bonaparte's Gull at the pond provided another morning highlight.

Laverne Hunter joined the group for lunch of soup and sandwiches at the Thornhills'. A refreshed crew hit the road again to look for Golden Eagles.

A short distance into Corn Valley, the group stopped and scanned the ridge line to the left of the road. Almost immediately, the cry of eagle got everyone's heart pumping harder. Within seconds, a second Golden Eagle was spotted. After everyone had a chance to get good looks, we moved on up the valley to a view of Beartown Mountain and its rock cliffs. Again, the eagles did not disappoint. Time and again, someone would exclaim, "Eagle!" At one point, we had six eagles in the air at once. Leader Tom decided we should move on and try for an even closer look with the warning that nearly every time he had tried this maneuver, it had failed. This time made up for previous failures as two eagle perched side by side in a large tree, one flew down and perched on the rock cliff, and another pair performed aerobic close quarter maneuvers. What a show!

While some birders called it a day, five diehards pressed on to Clifton Farm. They found no eagles but did find a somewhat unusual Ross's Goose in a pond with many Mallards and a few American Black Ducks. After much discussion, Mike sent a picture to regional expert Rick Knight who made the final ID.

In addition to the above highlights, the group found 23 Red-tailed Hawks and two Wilson's Snipe. The snipe were the first seen at Stuart's Pond in some time. The trip list is below along with a few pictures.



Morning Sky (Jane)



Scanning for Birds (Jane)



Loggerhead Shrike (Mike)



Peggy's Owl (Mike)



Bonaparte's Gull (Jane)



Ross's Goose (Mike)

All told, the group found 42 species. The complete list is below. Thanks to Michael Sanders for most of the counts. Jane and Jerry found the Canada Geese in the Mill Pond on the way to meet the group at Hardees.

Ross's Goose	1	Eastern Screech-Owl	3	White-breasted Nuthatch	6
Canada Goose	27	Belted Kingfisher	1	Carolina Wren	5
American Black Duck	4	Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	Eastern Bluebird	20
Mallard	150	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	American Robin	200
Great Blue Heron	1	Downy Woodpecker	3	Northern Mockingbird	5
Black Vulture	24	Northern Flicker	1	European Starling	3
Cooper's Hawk	1	Pileated Woodpecker	1	Cedar Waxwing	5
Red-tailed Hawk	23	Eastern Phoebe	1	Yellow-rumped Warbler	2
Rough-legged Hawk	1	Loggerhead Shrike	3	Field Sparrow	2
Golden Eagle	6	Blue Jay	10	Fox Sparrow	1
American Kestrel	4	American Crow	200	White-crowned Sparrow	50
Wilson's Snipe	2	Common Raven	6	Northern Cardinal	5
Bonaparte's Gull	1	Carolina Chickadee	6	Eastern Meadowlark	17
Mourning Dove	2	Tufted Titmouse	3	American Goldfinch	18