



Violet-Bellied Hummingbird
By Henry Griffin

**Illinois
Young
Birders**



The Hoot

Winter 2014

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IN THIS ISSUE

Remembering "Bird Man"

By Jeff Reiter, ILYB Adult Sponsor and Editor of *The Hoot*

When I was about 10, I attended a week-long "conservation camp" in Kentucky, operated by the National Wildlife Federation. I probably learned about it through *Ranger Rick*, my favorite magazine at the time.

The camp was in the Land Between the Lakes, near Paducah. I was too young to really appreciate the scenery but no doubt it was beautiful. What I remember most about the camp was a mop-topped boy named Jeremy. We called him Bird Man.

Jeremy was obsessed with birds and knew a lot about them. The campers were amazed at his ability to ID birds by sight and by sound. But we also poked fun at him, because being a "birdwatcher" back then was not necessarily cool.

This was a nature camp, so I think we all knew something about birds, but none of us were ready or willing to emulate Jeremy. We didn't want to be a Bird Man.

How times have changed. Dare I say it? Birding is cool now!



Today, a boy like Jeremy would fit right in. He'd enjoy being a member of ILYB and his passion for birds would be admired and embraced. He'd be welcome on all the upcoming ILYB field trips (see page 6). He could attend a summer camp just for young birders, thanks to the American Birding Association. He might even win ABA's Young Birder of the Year contest!

Yes, young birders in 2014 are lucky to have so many birding, learning and service opportunities. I get a charge out of seeing ILYB members take advantage of them and make their marks in the Illinois birding community.

My snapshots from that long-ago week in Kentucky somehow vanished, but I still have the patch shown here. It reminds me of my earliest days of nature appreciation, and my first encounter with a young person who was all about birds.

I wonder about Jeremy. What became of the Bird Man? Wherever he is, I'll bet he has a nice life list.



Blue-Gray Tanager by Henry Griffin

Birds of Panama

Read all about Henry Griffin's recent visit to the Central American hotspot. **Page 2**



Mallards by Sid Padgaonkar

One Lucky Duck

Kalman Strauss comes to the aid of a mallard in distress! **Page 3**

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The Amazing Birds of Panama

Text and photos by Henry Griffin
ILYB Member, Age 13

Since this is my last year of being homeschooled and my little sister is only in first grade, my parents decided that we would celebrate and travel around the world. This might be my last chance to do extended trips with my family during the colder months of the year for a long time since I am going to high school next year.

This past November into early December, we traveled to Panama to do some tropical birding and get a nice break from another horrible winter in Chicago (well, maybe not so horrible thanks to the AWESOME Snowy Owl irruption!).

On November 25, our family caught a relaxing flight to Panama on COPA Airlines. We arrived in Panama City in the early afternoon, where my first bird was Black Vulture, a life bird for me. I excitedly spotted many new birds on the ride to our hotel, the Radisson Summit.

The hotel grounds were beautiful, a birding paradise. Rainforest, grassland and even a few ponds dotted the hotel grounds, crisscrossed by well-groomed hiking trails. After our family got settled, I took a quick birding walk with my sister and mom, and we saw some interesting species such as Blue-Gray and Crimson-Backed

Tanagers, Tropical Kingbird, Social Flycatcher, Great Kiskadee, Rufous-and-White Wren, Clay-Colored Thrush and Red-Crowned Woodpeckers. Most of these species would turn out to be the more common ones on the trip.

Our first full day in Panama was even more exciting. In the early morning, my dad and I walked around the hotel grounds. A few of our favorite birds from the walk were Keel-Billed Toucan, Dusky-Headed Parakeet, Plain Chachalaca, Rufous-Capped Warbler, Thick-Billed Euphonia and Black-Throated Mango.

In the late morning, our family went to Miraflores Locks to watch ships go through the Panama Canal and learn about the history of Panama and the canal. I saw a few birds there including Magnificent Frigatebird and a funny

Ringed Kingfisher that perched on the front of a ship going through the locks!

Later that day, after our family gave a concert at a local orphanage (we are all musicians), I birded the hotel grounds once more by myself. Some highlights were

Southern Lapwing, Wattled Jacana, Ruddy-Breasted Seedeater and Orange-Chinned Parakeet.

Day 3 was a full day of birding, with arguably the best tour guide in Panama, Mario Ocana. We saw so many birds! A first stop at a marsh yielded White-Throated Crake, Red-Lored Amazon, Common Gallinule, Black-Bellied Whistling Duck and a beautiful Snail Kite.

We then went to the canopy tower at the Rainforest Discovery Center in nearby Soberania National Park. The tower is a metal structure that looks over miles of forest canopy in all directions. We saw so many



Thick-Billed Euphonia

amazing birds from up there such as Blue Cotinga, Blue Dacnis, Golden-Hooded Tanager, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Purple-Throated Fruitcrow, Great Black-Hawk, Keel-Billed and Chestnut-Mandibled Toucans and Yellow-Headed Caracara.

We walked the nearby trails in the rainforest and saw some more wonderful birds: Blue-Crowned and Red-Capped Manakins, Squirrel Cuckoo, Orchard Oriole, White-Breasted Wood-Wren, Pied Puffbirds, Tropical Pewee, and Plain and Song Wrens.

Back at the center, hummingbirds were swarming the feeders. A male Violet-bellied Hummingbird [see cover image] was especially beautiful.

On our way to lunch with our guide, we had a few stops along Pipeline Road. Highlights included a male Slaty-tailed Trogon and a female Howler Monkey.

After lunch, we went to a reliable place for Boat-Billed Herons. Within five minutes of tramping through swampland, we had flushed dozens of them.

Then it was on to the mudflats and mangroves near Panama City. Highlights here included Little Blue, Great Blue, Cocoi and Tricolored Herons, Snowy and Great Egrets, Yellow-Crowned and Black-Crowned Night Herons, Wood Stork, Prothonotary Warbler, Barred Antshrike, Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, Willet, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, and a few distant "peep" species that could not be identified.

The next day we flew to the western, mountainous region of Panama, landing in a cute little town called Boquete. It was a big travel day, but I saw a few birds including the more common ones in that region such as Great Kiskadee, Slate-Throated Redstart,

Summer Tanager, Rufous-Collared Sparrow and two species of hummingbirds, Black-Bellied and Scintillant. Black-and-White, Wilson's and Tennessee Warblers also were present.

The next day was a resting day enjoying the beautiful mountain scenery and surprisingly mild temperatures (low 70s). I saw more of the same bird species, but added a few new ones such as Orange-Billed Nightingale-Thrush, White-Winged and Flame-Colored Tanagers, Black-Throated Green Warbler and Elegant Euphonia, the bird of the day.

The real reason we were in Boquete was to look for the Resplendent Quetzal, which can only be described as being...well...resplendent. We headed off to a coffee plantation called Finca Lerida (Lerida's farm), to spend the afternoon looking for quetzals. While there, my camera almost died, we were growled at by a big cat, and we saw a close relative of the quetzal, the Collared Trogon, but not the Resplendent.

The next day our family went zip-lining through the rainforest. It was AWESOME, definitely one of the highlights of my trip. Few birds were seen, but a couple interesting ones were Yellow-Billed Siskins and a nice little Tropical Parula.

Day 8, our last full day in Boquete, was spent on one last spree to look for that elusive quetzal. We were in the right place and I saw

80 species of birds in less than three hours, but no quetzal! I was a bit dismayed, but I saw and photographed some really amazing birds, like Black Hawk-Eagle, seven species of hummingbirds, Smoky-Brown Woodpecker, eight species of woodcreepers, 10 kinds of flycatchers, Brown-Capped Vireo, Rufous-Browed Peppershrike, four species of wrens, four species of thrushes, 12 species of warblers, six species of tanagers and Prong-Billed Barbet.



Collared Trogon

The last few days spent in Panama were on the peaceful Bastimentos Island in the northwest part of the country. Compared to the other two legs of the journey, little time was spent birding, but I identified a few interesting species such as Montezuma Oropendola, Prothonotary and Yellow-Throated Warblers, Green Ibis, American Pygmy Kingfisher, Brown Pelican, Willet, Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker and a Bananaquit that got in our house!

The snorkeling at Bastimentos Island was phenomenal. We observed other-worldly coral formations and a myriad of sea creatures such as jellyfish (I got stung right below my eye-OUCH!), lobsters, crabs, eels, stingrays and even dolphins.

Overall my trip to Panama was an amazing, life-changing trip. I experienced the culture as well as seeing and photographing some unforgettable birds, while making friends along the way such as Mario, our birding guide in Panama City; Terry, our guide in Boquete; and a very kind family on Bastimentos Island.

If you ever think about birding in Central America, Panama, in my opinion, is by far the best country to choose!

Editor's note: Henry's family visited Australia in February and is now exploring Indonesia and Singapore. In April, the family begins a tour of Europe!

One Lucky Duck

By Kalman E. S. Strauss
ILYB Member, Age 12

I've seen my mother do it dozens of times. She picks up a littered six-pack holder tears it up methodically, and throws it in the trash. However, it never really struck me how important this simple act is. Then, one day, I saw a terrible sight that made me realize the true impact of litter.

That day I was walking along the edge of North Pond, taking a leisurely stroll, and observing a group of mallards swimming around in a shady inlet. I was daydreaming about what I was going to have for dinner that night, and marveling at how the sun glistened on the water.

Then I noticed something odd about one of the mallards. All the other ducks were ostracizing him and jabbing at him with their bills. I also observed that every time the bullied mallard bent down to take a dabble of water, it jerked its head up again as if it was unable to drink.

Finally, I realized that the poor bird had a plastic six-pack holder around its neck and couldn't wrench it off.

I watched the mallard for at least half an hour. The whole time he was unable to eat or drink, and was being harassed by the others. I knew that the bird would eventually die under this plastic collar that was slowly, but surely, sealing his fate.

I had to do something! I ran home to fetch a large net so that I could capture the bird and remove the deadly plastic. I then sprinted back to the pond but there was no sign of the afflicted duck. I reported the situation to other bird rescuers, hoping that someone would be able to locate and save the bird.

All day I worried over the poor bird struggling and failing to nourish himself. I could not stop picturing him, unable to feed, and with all the other ducks bullying him. Finally, I received news that a rescuer had found my mallard and had successfully removed the plastic from his neck. The duck would survive.

This man had spent hours patiently tracking the bird before he was able to save it. A true hero!

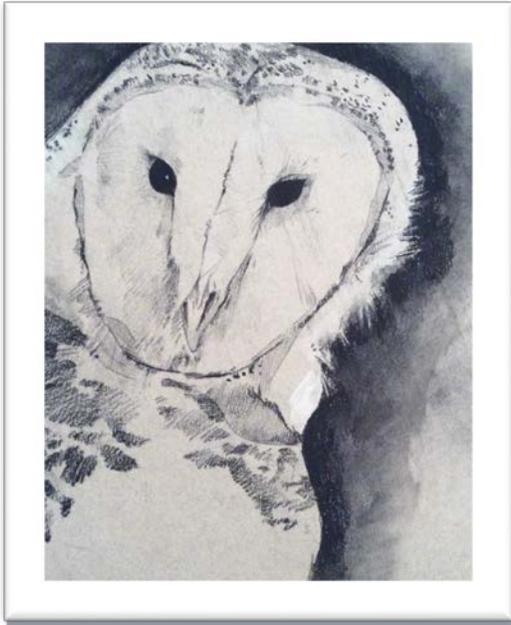
My duck got lucky. The fact is, most ducks in his situation, with a plastic six-pack holder around their necks, are not saved in time. They slowly starve or are strangled to death.



Mallard by Jeff Reiter

Since that day, I have always remembered the heart-wrenching truth about the danger of six-pack holders to birds. Now I'm the one tearing the holders into pieces and throwing the plastic into the garbage. I hope you'll do it too.

ILYB Art Gallery



Above: *Barn Owl* (charcoal on paper) and *Griffon Vulture* (white pencil on black paper) by Catherine Gilbert, age 14.

Right: *Common Nighthawk* (colored pencil, watercolor and pen) by Nandu Dubey, age 16.

Many thanks to Catherine and Nandu for sharing their talents with *The Hoot*. Feeling artistic? Submit your drawing, sketch or painting for the next issue!



Take the Eagle Quiz!

Courtesy of *Bird Watcher's Digest*

1. How many bald eagles are estimated to reside in North America?
 - a. 300
 - b. 3,000
 - c. 30,000
 - d. 300,000

(continued on next page)



By Glenn Kaupert

Eagle Quiz *(continued)*

2. At what age does a bald eagle attain its characteristic white head, white tail and brown body?
 - a. 2 years
 - b. 3 years
 - c. 5 years
 - d. 7 years
3. How many eagle species occur in North America?
 - a. One
 - b. Two
 - c. Three
 - d. Four
4. How much does a typical adult bald eagle weigh?
 - a. 3 pounds
 - b. 5 pounds
 - c. 10 pounds
 - d. 17 pounds

(answers on page 6)



ILYB member Isoo O'Brien, age 10, at the 2014 Gull Frolic

Join ILYB!

Do you like birds? Are you between the ages of 9 and 18? If yes, we think you'd enjoy being a member of Illinois Young Birders. You'll meet other young birders throughout Illinois and neighboring states, attend expertly guided field trips and make lasting friendships with others who share your passion for birding. Sign up today at illinoisyoungbirders.org!

Gull Frolic Photo Album

ILYB was well represented at the IOS 13th Annual Gull Frolic on February 15. The all-day event took place at North Point Marina in Winthrop Harbor, IL, near Waukegan. Eight gull species were spotted!



Glaucous Gull and Iceland Gull by Luke Haberkorn



Jake Cvetas



Long-Tailed Duck (female)



Eddie Kasper



Luke Haberkorn



Brett Kasper



Lesser Black-Backed Gull



Event coordinator and Chum Master Amar Ayyash

ILYB Adult Volunteers

Matthew Cvetas, Chair

Josh Engel, Field Trip
Coordinator

Scott Cohrs

Eric Gyllenhaal

Kelly Kasper, Membership

Jennifer Kuroda, North Central
Illinois

Ben Murphy, Central Illinois

Jeff Reiter, Newsletter

About *The Hoot*

The Hoot is a publication of the Illinois Young Birders, a project of the Illinois Ornithological Society. Material is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without the specific written permission of IOS. Articles, photos, artwork and other submissions by ILYB members are always welcome. Please send materials to the editor: jreiter@wordsonbirds.com.

Welcome New ILYB Members!

Aidan Cullen

Benjamin Guo

"Stas" Gunkel

Alex Mortensen

Maximilian Wille

Zachary Haag



Eagle Quiz Answers

- Answer: d) 300,000** bald eagles reside in North America as of 2013. Bald eagles are not known to breed outside of North America, so that figure also represents the global population of the species. *Source: Partners in Flight Population Estimates Database.*
- Answer: c) 5 years.** Only about one-fourth of bald eagles attain their full adult plumage by 4.5 years of age. In its fourth year, a bald eagle may have a white head and tail, but its body plumage may still be spotted with white. Full adult plumage is always attained by 5.5 years. *Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birds of North America Online.*
- Answer: b) Only two** eagle species occur in North America: the bald eagle and the golden eagle. Bald eagles can be found from coast to coast in appropriate habitat. Golden eagles are common throughout Canada and the western United States, but are mostly rare in the eastern U.S. More than 60 eagle species exist throughout the world.
- Answer: c) 10 pounds.** Bald eagles weigh from 6.6 to 14.1 pounds. Residents of southern regions are smaller than those of the North. In Alaska, adult males averaged 9.32 pounds, and adult females averaged 11.79 pounds. Female eagles are about 25 percent larger than males. *Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birds of North America Online.*

ILYB BULLETIN BOARD

Congratulations Aaron!

In December, an ILYB member turned some heads in the northeast Illinois birding community by setting a new Big Year record for Cook County. Aaron Gyllenhaal tallied 281 species in 2013, breaking the mark that stood for 23 years by 7 species.

Check Out These Blogs

ILYB member Nick Minor produces and publishes fascinating bird research on his own blog called **The Science of Birds**. His most recent entries have been about woodpeckers. Go to <http://scienceofbirds.blogspot.com>.

ILYB member Nathan Goldberg contributes to a popular blog called **Nemesis Bird**. His recent topics include winter waterfowl in Illinois, long-eared owls and white-winged scoters. Go to nemesiscard.com.

Upcoming Field Trips

- Saturday, March 22, 7:30 am
Des Plaines River Widewaters, Channahon, IL
- Sunday, April 27, 7:00 am
Chain O' Lakes State Park, Antioch, IL
- Sunday, May 18, 7:30 am
Jackson Park/Wooded Island, Chicago
- Saturday-Sunday, June 14-15
Mississippi River Weekend with Iowa Young Birders, Savanna, IL
- Saturday, Aug 23, 8:00 am
Shorebirds of the Illinois River, Havana, IL

Field Trip Results

Trip summaries and photos are posted on the ILYB website: illinoisyoungbirders.org