**ME, Mount Desert Island and vicinity**

Michael Good ’82  
10 and 11 May 2013  
59 species

“Hello Bill, Here’s my list from MDI and my post to Maine Birds...Thanks for another great EC Birding Big Day. Sending you my regards, Michael”

Michael’s post to “Maine Birds”:

Mount Desert Island Birds: Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue and Eastern Kingbird  
Every year since about 1982, Earlham College alumni have been part of a birding tradition starting with EC professors Bill Buskirk and Jim Cope to raise money for the College. Several years ago Bill was on a field trip in New Zealand and decided to expand on the concept. Now we have EC alumni all around the world counting birds and carrying on the tradition of a spring bird count...now international in scope. I am thankful to be part of this informal international count and appreciated the time in the field. With migration really in the beginning phases here on MDI, it turned into an amazing day including flocks of tropical migrants like Blackburnian and Black-throated Blue Warbler, Eastern Kingbird and large mixed flocks of birds between Raindrops. By the end of the day the winds were gusting and probably still full of new arrivals. Thanks to Bill Buskirk for keeping the tradition going.

Black-throated Green Warbler and American Redstart. Photos: Michael Good

**MA: Franklin County**

Susan Conger ’81, Jennie Isbell ESR ’07, Newell Pledger-Shinn ’02 and Bee  
11 May 2013  
95 species

“Hello all! Greetings to Bill, Metcalfs, Michael Goode, Ricardo, Leslie B, Wendy Tori, Brent, Karen M, and other folks I’ve had the pleasure of birding with one place or another! Hope y’all had a fantastic Birding Big Day. Attached is our species list for Franklin County, MA. It was sort of a lousy day for birding, but we eked out some nice finds. Don’t know if we added any unique species to the count, but I hope so! I pledged a buck a bird this year, so hopefully y’all did well. Warm regards, Newell”
MA: **Boston area** (Rock Meadow, Belmont; Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge; Minutemen Bikeway, Lexington).
Sarah Wagner ’02, Becky Wagner ’99 and Jed Bopp '99 with Grace Bopp.
11 May 2013
53 species

“I am visiting my sister and her family in Boston and we had quite a crowd of helpers and participants and a few locations for our list on Saturday. Becky and Jed Bopp’s daughter, Grace, was the youngest participant (16 months). We also had my boyfriend Eliot and his parents helping out. The Blackburnian and Black-throated greens were the best treats. Thanks, Sarah”

MA: **Plymouth County**
Evan Dalton ’08
10 May and 11 May 2013
149 species

As promised, here is a spreadsheet of the birds I saw (split between the two days). I only birded in Plymouth County and the total came to 149 (105+129) so close to 150! Great talking to you the other day — we'll catch up again soon. -Evan

**RI: Trustom Pond Wildlife Refuge to Newport**
John Bean ’77
11 May 2013
74 species

In a note to Jonathan and Dottie: “Hi guys, this year I'm finally going to participate! I had a chance to bird on Saturday for half the day. It was rainy off and on, but I went down to the Rhode Island coast at Trustom Pond Wildlife Refuge and worked my way over to Newport and then home. Here's my list. Look forward to seeing you this summer. John”

**RI: Block Island**
Scott Comings ’93
11 May 2013
54 species

Scott leads The Nature Conservancy’s efforts on Block Island.

“Bill, Good morning. Below are the birds (54 species) I found on Saturday 5/11on Block Island, RI — Not the best day for birding as it was foggy in the morning and drizzling in the afternoon. I was able to bird most of the day. Looking forward to the Big Day next year (hopefully it won’t be raining and pea soup fog). Hope all is well with you. Best, Scott”

**CT/NY: Long Island and southern CT**
Emma Olsen ’08
11 May 2013
76 species
“Hi Bill, Congrats on 31 years of Birding Big Day! I'm glad that we were able to participate once again, though I don't know how much our list will add this year. The combination of bad weather (thunderstorms at Jamaica Bay and driving winds on the barrier islands!), a late migration, and residual damage from Hurricane Sandy landed us with an unusual count that was smaller than we'd hoped or expected, and was missing many of the birds we expect to see at this time of year. Our total was 72 species (76 if you count invasive species). Our full list is included below. My party included myself, my boyfriend Steve Martin (now a Birding Big Day veteran of three years), and a visiting friend and first-time birder, Melissa McGue. Our location list is as follows: Ridgefield, CT; Hillview Reservoir in Yonkers, NY; Jamaica Bay NWR in Far Rockaway, NY; various locations in Stony Brook and East Setauket, NY; Elizabeth Morton NWR in Sag Harbor, NY; sections of the eastern barrier islands along Dune Road in Hampton Bays, NY; and all driving between locations.

“Our best birding for the day was at Dune Road, where thousands of terns could be seen fishing and the shorebird migration is underway; this is also where we encountered a raft of almost 50 Black Scoters, close to shore. We were hoping for some of the other birds folks have been seeing off southern Long Island (including shearwaters), but the rain and fog made visibility from the shore very limited. We were also saddened to see that a large part of Jamaica Bay NWR is still too damaged from the hurricane for the trails to be reopened.

“Here's hoping that our list adds something to the collective list! We had a great time, even if we spent most of it cold and soaking wet! Please let me know if you have any questions about our list. Best wishes! Cheers, Emma Olsen”

**NY: Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and Wetlands system**
Bill Buskirk ’66, Professor Emeritus
10 May 2013
97 species

“I started the day out early in the marshes of the wildlife refuge and quickly picked up a good variety of waterfowl and shorebirds. Highlights of the day for me were Glossy Ibis, Virginia Rail, Sandhill Crane, Stilt Sandpipers, Black Terns (a personal favorite). However, I missed a breeding plumaged Ruff that was reported but disappeared shortly before I got to the location. Bill”

**NY: Tompkins County, Caroline Twp**
Steve Kelling ’77 and Bill Buskirk ’66, Professor Emeritus
11 May 2013
105 species

“I met Steve at his home in the hills east of Ithaca at 4:30 where we quickly heard a calling Barred Owl and the notes of migrating birds overhead — Steve could identify many of them. Steve is the Head of the Information Science Division at the Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology; as such he oversees many of their Citizen Science programs, including the eBird project. He has also been a member of the winning team during some years of the World Series of Birding. We birded the forested back roads of the township as well as a variety of rural residential, farm and wetland areas. My highlight of the day was “feeling” (aka hearing) a Ruffed Grouse drumming — a rare experience for this Hoosier!! A great morning of friendship and learning with a friend I don’t get to see often, I had a blast! Bill”
NJ: Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge and coastal Atlantic County
Betsy and Jonathan Griffith EC parents, '94, '97 and '01
10 May 2013
65 species

“Here is our list from coastal Atlantic County, NJ. Thanks to some great birders we went out with, there is a better collection of warblers, and ID'd with greater certainty than just Jon and I would have gotten. (We were out with a birding group, but either Jon or I saw each of these.) It was just a gorgeous day to be out birding along the coast on Friday. Thanks for getting us out there! Warmly, Jon and Betsy Griffiths (EC parents, '94, '97 and '01)”

Note: While Betsy and Jon worked NJ for the BBD their daughter, Megan, her husband and family were covering part of South Africa!

MD: Hughes Hollow, Brighton Dam, Quiet Waters Park, Chesapeake Bay
Toni ’79 and Bruce ’79 Evans, Dave Burgevin
11 May 2013
102 species

“Hi Bill, Bruce, Dave Burgevin and I birded together on Saturday. We were a smaller crew than last year, but did pretty well and had a great time. Already counting down until next year! Attached is our list. Best, Toni”

MD/NJ: various areas
Dottie ’79 and Jonathan ’80 Doherty
10 and 11 May 2013
106 species

“Bill, Our bird list for BBD is attached. Pretty good numbers, though we are noticing all the things we didn't get! I dropped this into the file you created last year — hope that helps. Had to insert a couple of species that for some reason were not in last year's list (Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow). Admittedly we did our birding on Friday and Saturday morning. Let me know when you have the rest of the lists.

“And Bill, thank you, thank you for being one of the two people who have made this outing an incredible experience for all of us. Jonathan”

GA: Whitfield County
Gretchen Shurr Lugthart ’86 and John Lugthart, and briefly David and Jen DesRochers
11 May 2013
51 species

Rainy in morning, turning sunny by afternoon, more rain around 4:00 pm, temps in 60s and 70s. Habitats included oak-hickory forested mountainside (with pines on ridges), power line cuts on mountainside, open pasture and field, streamside areas, wetland and pond.
“Greetings Bill,
I have attached the list of our birds from Whitfield County Georgia. We had a wonderful time, mainly just my husband and I, although David and Jen Desrochers helped out briefly. I just love the opportunity to get out and watch and listen, even though many of the warblers stump me with their treetop ways. We have phoebes nesting on the porch again this year, and bluebirds in at least one of the nesting boxes. More than one wood thrush is lingering around our yard, and we hope nesting is actually taking place. They sing a lot and it is like Heaven. My husband’s favorite part was in our backyard by Mill Creek when a whole family of Carolina wrens appeared, with the three youngsters looking cute and stupid, and the parents scolding like crazy. Happy birding! Gretchen (Schurr) Lugthart”

**FL: Leon County**
Todd Engstrom ’76 and Wilson Baker ’62?
11 May 2013
90 species
“Wilson Baker and I birded exclusively in Leon County for most of the day for the Earlham College Big Birding Day.”

**MI: Walled Lake**
Dan Gertiser EC parent ’06
11 May 2013
49 species.

“I knew the day would be slow, I checked woodcreeper.com and the weather showed the birds stacking up south of Michigan and very few migrants on the move.
I was able to call in a Eastern Screech Owl while I was drinking my coffee — a good start. However, I then missed on Barred and Great Horned. I am usually able to get one of these two species. My stakeout for Hooded and Cerulean Warblers was a bust. With the wind and rain, I knew it would be slow. This is the first time in 10 years that I missed those species. I went to check out some fields where I always get Bobolink, and Meadowlark. I dipped again, and missed the Meadowlarks. There used to be a great spot here for Henslow Sparrows. For the first time in my life, the little skulker popped up into view and I was able to take a picture of him with my cell phone! This made me laugh at my luck here. On a day that I am missing all the warblers and species I would only expect to hear, a skulker pops into view.
I stopped by another local pond and had a late Gadwall. The Blue Wing Teal that were there on Friday were gone!
A fun few hours, and then off to run errands. – Dan”

**IN: Richmond area**
Brent Smith, Professor of Biology
10 and 11 May 2013
62 species

“Bill and Wendy, Well, I had a lot of fun on Friday for the little time I was able to be in the field. I started about 6:00 with a cup of coffee on the deck but heard no owls this year, though the dawn chorus was very nice. Out at 7:00 or so on back campus until a 10:00 date to see the progress in Stanley (very interesting!). Then back to my deck for lunch (must have seen 25 yellow-rumped
warblers, but not a single other warbler species!), then to CEC, Iverson's and (briefly) Wildman.

“The afternoon was quite wet - a steady light rain which didn't totally ruin the day, but activity was kind of low. Saw a great squabble between a green heron and crow at the front prairie pond at CEC, then later scared up a Sora in the west-side cattail marsh. On to Iverson's tree plantation and saw my annual Palm Warbler hopping among the stunted little trees — in almost the exact same place as the previous two years! That was fun, but in a steady light rain and I was pretty soaked despite a raincoat. After a brief visit to Wildman (Wood Thrush) I went home to peal off wet clothes for the Phi Beta Kappa ceremony to see three favorite students get inducted, but not before seeing a house wren gleaning spiders off my giraffe on the deck only to be chased away by a Carolina Wren! With 75 coming for breakfast the next day (TZ/KE + some favorite other seniors and their families) at the Meeting House, I was obligated to call it a day and do some shopping!

“Just 62 species. Wish there were more, but, again, it was a lot of fun to get out! Brent”

**IN: Indianapolis, southside**
Phoebe Oaks ’12
12 May 2013
12 species

No additional comments received.

**OH: Wilmington area**
Joel Hogle ’12
11 May 2013
23 species

Joel birded in an arboretum in the Wilmington area where he now lives.

**IL: Chicago area**
Charlie Boyd ’14
11 May 2013
67 species

No additional comments received.

**WI: Madison area**
Kate Fitzmier ’02
12 May 2013
30 species

“Bill, Baby Bell and I did get out for her 5-week old BBD jaunt today from 10:30-11:45. Here's our tally, but if I should send it to someone else for the official record, please let me know, and I am happy to do so. Thanks, and hope your birding in NY was fantastic and you are well. Cheers! Love Katie”
**TX: Austin/ Texas Hill Country area**
Martin Sluk '09
11 May 2013
64 species

No additional comments received.

**MT: Missoula area**
Katie Weiss '78
12 May 2013
45 species

“Hi Bill, Well the list is shorter this year. I decided to go local and only go to places I could get to on my bike. That included riding up to the top of Story Hills just north of the edge of town (where I looked for raptors mostly) and to the trails through woods and marsh by the East Gallatin River and to the Cherry River Wildlife Refuge. Cherry River proved the most fun. I went in the morning and then returned this evening. I saw a pair of Solitary Sandpapers this morning — my first this year and this evening a Sora started calling and a Great Horned Owl was sitting in a big cottonwood nearby...worth the bike trip home along woodland trails with a headlamp! Now I am tired! Love, Katie”

**CO: Fort Collins area (eastern plains and Rocky Mountains)**
Paul Ode '86, Meena Balgopal
11 May 2013
123 species

“Hi Bill and Jonathan, I was only able to sneak away for one day of birding (Saturday, 11 May), but it turned out to be a great day! After a very warm and exceedingly dry winter, we had a lot of late snow and rain that made for some excellent birding (esp. ducks and shorebirds). I drove an hour to the Pawnee National Grasslands to begin birding at dawn. After picking up several good short grass prairie species (e.g. McCown's Longspurs, Brewer's Sparrow, Mountain Plover, etc.), I visiting some productive wetlands before heading back to Ft. Collins late afternoon, where Meena was able to join me for the rest of the day. We did some more birding in Ft. Collins in search of some late Common Redpolls (no luck) before heading up the mountains to Estes Park to look for the three Rosy Finches (which had been recently reported, courtesy our early May snowstorms — again, no luck but we did find some higher elevation species before the sun set). At the end of the day, we travelled 307 miles throughout Weld and Larimer Counties (CO) over 3500 ft in elevation finding 123 species. I must say, I have many wonderful memories of my years at Earlham. Very high among them are the hours spent birding with you, Bill, and Jim Cope. These have been some of the most positive, most influential experiences in my life! Best wishes to you both. Paul”

**NM: Corrales**
Jannie '65 and Jerry '63 Dusseau
11 May 2013
30 species
“Hi Bill, Thought we would throw in a few birds for your Big Birding Day List. Maybe a few will be unique. They are from our backyard and a short walk in the bosque nearby.

“We are in the midst of getting organized for the Arctic. Packing is somewhat of a challenge given the variety of activities and need to keep it all to a minimum. When will you and Marianne be arriving in Oslo? After several days in Bergen with Jack Waymire, we are coming over to Oslo together on the 27th, probably by train. Did you know Janet Gunzenhauser, biology major, class of ’70? We are planning to meet her in Copenhagen on the way home. I’m sure Marianne knows her as they were in my Anat and Phys class together. Haven’t seen her since. We sent our final payment in so I guess we are committed. Really looking forward to another great trip, seeing you and Marianne, and seeing walruses. Play hard and sending a big hug. Jerry and Jannie”

AZ: Pima County - Cienega Creek Natural Preserve, Aqua Caliente Park, backyard
Bonnie Poulos
10 to 12 May 2013
30 species

No additional comments received.

AZ: Hereford, San Pedro, Ash Canyon
Mary Pacey ’70
10 May 2013
53 species

“Wonderful day here. So many new birds for me. Highlights were the Vermillion Flycatcher displaying, the Gray Hawk (and it’s distinctive call) and the all new to me hummingbirds of the day. Cheers, Mary Pacey”

AZ: Gila County, Pinal Mountain
Nancy (Steinke) ’65 and Dave Pearson
11 May 2013
92 species

“Bill, Here is Nancy and my list of 92 species seen yesterday, 11 May on Pinal Mt. south of Globe, AZ. Cheers, Dave and Nancy”

CA: south Orange Co. to Cuyamaca State Park in the Laguna Mountains
Abby Sirulnik ’96 and daughter
10 and 11 May 2013
19 species

“Here is what we saw while making the trip from south Orange County, CA, to Cuyamaca State Park in the Laguna Mountains on the 10th and the next day in the park (the 11th). My daughter did most of the spotting and writing. At the park, she woke up in the tent before dawn and said, “We should get up now because now is the time to see birds.” After weighing the cost of walking around before my campfire coffee against the benefit a great morning birding with my daughter, we headed
out (without coffee). We lasted about two hours before she was ready to head back to camp to start 
the fire and reminisce about our wonderful morning together. I hope that all is well with you, Abby”

**CA: Napa, Sonoma and San Francisco areas**  
Emily Terao ’11  
12 May 2013  
21 species

“Hi Wendy! Hope you are having a great time in NZ! I didn't have time to take the day off to go 
birding, but I wrote down the birds that I saw on Sunday (5/12) as I went about the day. I hope you 
had a great weekend birding!! - Emily”

**OR: Eugene, University of Oregon campus**  
Elly Vandergrift ’97  
12 May 2013  
1 species

“Hi Bill, Oh how embarrassed I am to share my totally lame list because going out birding just did 
not work for my kids this weekend. But we did see the Vaux's swifts of Agate Hall yesterday so 
please add them to your global list. I hope others were more successful and helpful that I am! Elly”

**OR: Portland to the Pacific Coast, Willamette Valley and Columbia River bottomlands**  
Skip Russell ’80  
10 May 2013  
135 species

“Hi Bill, My count is done and recorded. See attached. As I write this, there are three birds in the 
yard that I missed yesterday (Anna’s Hummingbird dive-bombing, Pileated Woodpecker and Red-
breasted Nuthatch)! Plus down the road, a Cooper's Hawk is harassing crows. Ah well, a few will 
always be missed.

“Some photos from the day can be downloaded from here: 
[https://picasaweb.google.com/skuarua/BirdingBigDayMay102013](https://picasaweb.google.com/skuarua/BirdingBigDayMay102013) Take your pick of any or all.

“Anyway, here's a summary of my day: I arranged a day off work Friday so I could dedicate the day 
to birding. My final tally was 135 species, a little off from last-year's pace but still a respectable 
number. It was a fun day that took me from Portland, to the Oregon coast, to the southern 
Willamette Valley, and back north to the Columbia River bottomlands — over the course of 17 
hours and 350 miles. Highlights were plenty of lingering ducks (22 anseriform species), a few 
typically east side species seen west side (e.g. Avocet, Stilt, Forster's Tern, Clark's Grebe), and a 
puffin at a location where they are rarely seen. Challenges were dismally low numbers of shorebirds 
and gulls (acres of prime mudflats and beach with no birds). Skip Russell ’80, Portland, Oregon”
Pigeon Guillemot (above) and Pelagic Cormorant (below), Oregon Coast, 10 May 2013. Photo: Skip Russell
OR: Portland to Pacific coast
Jon Wagner ’04 and Prairie Hale ’03
11 May 2013
107 species

“Hey Bill, Prairie and I had a pretty epic Birding Big Day. We pretty much retraced the trip that James [Sterrett] and I took last year, starting in Portland and working our way out to Tillamook and up to Cannon Beach. We didn’t get much in the way of warblers and vireos but we hit the jackpot on water fowl, including: Greater White-fronted Geese, Snow Geese and Even a Ross’s Goose. I hope all is well. Let me know if you need anything else. Jon”

WA: San Juan Islands
Dottie Dummit ’65
10 May 2013
20 species

Dottie sent in a list from a boat trip to the islands!

WA: Lacey
Dottie Dummit ’65
12 May 2013
Dottie’s second list was from her yard in Lacey.

**WA: Port Townsend, Fort Worden State Park, etc.**  
Jess Swihart ’09, Emily Ostroff ’09, Jess’ fiancé  
11 May 2013

“Hi Bill! Here’s our bird list for the 11th! Emily Ostroff, myself and my fiancé did most of our birding in Fort Worden State Park in Port Townsend, WA. The rest was at various parts around Port Townsend, Kingston and Bremerton. Unfortunately we got a bit distracted from birding by the sighting of a molting elephant seal, a California sea lion and a veritable herd of harbor seals. We had a lovely flock of about eight brant fly right in front of us when we were on the point of a short peninsula that juts out into Admiralty Inlet/Puget Sound!”

**AK: Homer to Juneau**  
Matt Klostermann ’04  
11 May 2013  
93 species

Matt was visiting on the mainland of Alaska in transit to his summer research on St. George Island in the Pribilofs!

**AK: Anchorage to Homer**  
Tom Evans ’76  
10 and 11 May 2013  
59 species

On 2 April Tom, who works with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, wrote to me: “Spring is slowly coming to Alaska. Last week temperatures were above freezing all week during the day so the 22 inches of snow that we got 10 days ago is melting fast. My plans for the Birding Big Day are now coming together. I will be in Homer attending the shorebird festival on May 10-12th so will send you a list on either the 12th or 13th of May.”

On 12 May he wrote:  
“Hi Bill, Attached is my list. Don’t have time to chat as the taxi arrives in 5. Cheers, Tom”

**HA: Maui**  
Chris Warren ’05 Heather Meckel ’04 and Erick Lungren ’09  
11 May 2013  
36 species

“Hey Bill, Here is our ECBBD report. Had a great time. Attached is our list. The Maui chapter of the Earlham Birding Big Day started with Heather Meckel ’04 and I (Chris) hiking into The Nature Conservancy’s Waikamoi Preserve, accessed through Haleakala National Park. We quickly picked up the three most common Hawaiian forest birds (Apapane, I’iwi, and Maui Alauahio) before reaching
the native forest. Thankfully my work with Maui Forest Bird Recovery Project helped locate a pair of critically endangered Kiwikiu (Maui Parrotbill) along with several endangered Akohekohe singing their strange songs. Strangely we missed the exceedingly common introduced Japanese Bush-warbler or Uguisu! After leaving Waikamoi, Heather and I drove up the hill toward the summit in hopes of finding some Nene or Chukars, both normally reliable, and promptly we missed both. Thankfully after a phone call with Erick Lundgren ’09, who we were soon to meet up with, we were happy to hear that he had heard a Chukar earlier that morning in Poli Poli State Park!

“After picking up Erick in Kula we made our way down the hill toward Kahului picking up some exotic Northern Mockingbirds and Mourning Dove along the way. On the lawn of the Maui College campus we found the day’s only Red-crested Cardinals and Java Sparrows (one with some strange flower-shaped barrettes attached like bands on its legs!). At Kanaha Ponds we picked the day’s first (of many) Hawaiian Stilts and Coots. We then headed down to Kealia Ponds NWR where we picked up some more shorebirds and African Silverbills.

“We then moved down to La Perouse, the site of the last eruption on Maui (1790), in hopes of some seabirds. All we wound up with was some very distant and unidentifiable views of some shearwaters. However, this gave Erick an idea. He recently participated in a volunteer banding of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters in nearby Kihei and knew where a colony was. After dinner we made our way to the popular beach where the shearwater colony resides. We then had a lovely evening watching the sunset and shearwaters landing and running by our feet toward their burrows. Needless to say, it was a nice way to end the day.

“Even with a meager 36 species we ended up with many native and exciting species in between a day’s worth of Earlham memories.”

**NEW ZEALAND: Wanganui region of North Island**
Wendy Tori, Assistant Professor Biology
10 and 11 May 2013
56 species

Wendy has been leading Earlham’s New Zealand Program this spring semester and will return after travel to Australia and Borneo in early summer.

“Hi Bill, How are you doing? How did you do during BBD? I had a lot of fun birding and saw a lot of interesting species -). My totals are not that high, but they are pretty good considering I was in Whanganui and New Zealand (with no boat), je, je. I saw a total of 56 species (see attached list).

“I visited the following places: 1) Tongariro National Park; 2) Westmere Lake; 3) Bushy Park; 4) Virginia Lake; 5) Beach Front and 6) Basin Botanical Reserve. I have a few students that should send their lists in the next day (e.g. Emily, Charlie, etc). I will send them to you as soon as I get them. How can I help you for the wrap up of the BBD? Do you need help putting the lists together or with any other thing? Please let me know...I will be in Whanganui for the next six days, after that I will be with limited internet access for about three weeks. I miss you! Wendy”
LATVIA/ESTONIA
Karen (Hibbard-Rode) Mager ’04 and Markus Mager
11 and 12 May 2013
36 species

“Hello Bill and All! This year’s Birding Big Day was a lot of fun since we are in Europe right now and I’m trying to learn the birds here. I don’t have a handle on European birdsongs yet so nearly all of these birds were ID’d by sight. The list of birds we could ID with certainty isn’t too long (36 species) but I hope several of these will be unique contributions to the total. We were en route by bicycle through the Baltics over the weekend so this list encompasses northwestern Latvia through much of Estonia. The weather didn’t cooperate with us (our most promising spot along the route, a migratory bird area on the Latvian coast, was completely socked in with fog when we passed through) but we still managed to see birds here and there in other places.

“As it happens, my bird guide is in German (a translation of Hayman and Hume’s 2009 guide)! Luckily Markus knows all the birds by their German names anyway so we just used those and I actually don't know the English common names for a lot of these birds. I've included Latin names here too for you to use. If you happen to translate these into English common names, I'd be curious to see the list.

“Hope you all had a good weekend out there! We are planning to post some birding photos on our blog when we get the chance so you can check in a week or so if you’d like to see them (www.2enroute.blogspot.com). Karen”

SOUTH AFRICA: Pietermaritzburg area
Megan Griffiths-Ward ’97, David Ward, Gemma and Liam Ward, Nils Kure
11 May 2013
132 species

Megan, on the faculty at the School of Life Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, sent the following note. Her parents participated in the E.CBBD from New Jersey.

“Dear Bill (and other members of the BBD team), It was once again an absolute pleasure to participate in the Earlham College Birding Big Day. We love that the global format has been continued so that we can send in our lists from wherever in the world we might be. We were very happy to be back on our home turf in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, this year. We set a personal goal to surpass our totals from previous years (the highest one was 104 in 2011). I think we managed that in good form.

“This year the Griffiths-Ward team included me, my husband David Ward, our children Gemma (age 5) and Liam (age 2), and our dear friend Nils Kure. Nils and David studied together under Gordon Maclean (who authored several earlier editions of the Roberts bird guides for South Africa) and the two were keen to collaborate on a Birding Big Day for the first time since graduate school.

“I started my morning with a cup of coffee on the veranda while David and Nils went to the Darvill Bird Sanctuary to see what water and grassland birds they could spot. The highlight of my early morning was hearing and then spotting (twice!) the Giant Kingfisher doing a flyover of our back
garden. David and Nils were thrilled to pick up the Red-faced, Levaillant’s and Croaking Cisticolas at Darvill — unusual to see all three in one place. We then headed off to Tala Game Reserve and Ferncliff Nature Reserve. Despite being told that our outing was focussed on birds, Gemma was particularly keen to see White Rhinos and Hippos, while Liam firmly stated that he was there to see Giraffes. Fortunately both children got to see their animals of choice. David and I were more excited about the Goliath Heron and Malachite Kingfishers that we spotted.

“In the afternoon, David and Nils went to Cumberland Nature Reserve and managed to see the magnificent Trumpeter Hornbill. Nils was also quite chuffed to see a Peregrine Falcon for only the second time in his life. Gemma, Liam and I managed to pick up the last bird of the day — the Little Swift — while we were waiting for our well-earned pizza dinner to cook.

“In the end our total number of bird species was 132! Not bad for a time of year when many intra-African migrants have left and the bloody Ploceids are virtually impossible to differentiate in their non-breeding plumage. Our final list is included.

“We hope the day was as successful and enjoyable for all the other participants around the world. Thanks again for letting us take part. We look forward to many BBDs in the future. Very best regards, Megan Griffiths-Ward ’97”

DOMINICA
Leslie Bishop, Biology Research Professor
11 May 2013
39 species

Leslie, who is a Fulbright Scholar in Dominica this year, sent the following in the lead up to the BBD:

“I want to join in. I sit on my little terrace every morning with my coffee and watch hummingbirds, bananquits, bullfinchs and tremblers. Some days others pass by — but these are my regulars. I even share my bananas and pineapples with them — if I leave a treat on the railing they join me for breakfast. I may not get a long list — but I sure will have my regulars.”
“Hi Bill, This year I was able to cover both the Tucson, AZ, area and two parts of Belize. Last year, my good friend Bonnie joined me (she having much more birding experience than I have had) for the birding trip. We had such a good time that we planned on doing it again this year. Unfortunately (or in hindsight possibly fortunately), when I scheduled the workshop in Belize that I was teaching, I did not realize that it would be the same weekend as BBD. Bonnie still wanted to participate and I don’t think there are any rules about bringing non-Earlhamite friends in on the tally. So Bonnie covered the Tucson area and I was off to Belize. This was my second trip to Belize, for the same reason — to work. With the help of a co-worker we gave a one week workshop on diagnosing and detecting pathogens of farm raised shrimp to 12 Belizeans involved in the shrimp industry. The workshop ran from Monday through Saturday, so the only birds I saw on the first two days were in Belize City at the hotel where I was staying. Luckily this trip I wanted to stay a bit longer and my husband, Mirek, joined me Friday. So Sunday the fun began. We took a taxi to the town near Lamanai, one of many Mayan ruins in the country. After the taxi it is an hour + ride on the New River to the ruins. The river boat guide not only points out the howled monkeys, turtles, crocodiles, but lucky for me also the birds. So my list expanded, and I am sure that I caught a few that now one else did. I have included some pictures. The first is of the mystery bird that was in Belize City, that I have no idea what it is. As I have mentioned, Bonnie is much better at keying out birds than I am.
Spotted Sandpiper, a winter migrant to Belize, molted into breeding plumage - BB

“Jesus Christ bird” (aka Northern Jacana), which walks on top of the lily pads. We saw bunches of them.
The third is Mirek and I in front of the Mask Temple at Lamanai.

I hope everyone had as good a time birding this weekend as I did and that collectively we are able to beat last year’s record. All the best, Linda Nunan ’78”

MEXICO: San Blas area of Nayarit
Mark Stackhouse (mark@westwings.com) ’80
10 and 11 May 2013
162 species

Mark lives in San Blas, Nayarit, where he is a professional bird and nature guide. His lists were provided in location-by-location format (for eBird purposes — an ambitious and significant global database of bird population distributions overseen by Steve Kelling ’77 at the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology). He also sent daily composite lists that we copied here. His description of his activities are more detail than many others, but catch such a taste of birding in Mexico that I have included them in their entirety. He went out a bit on both days, squeezing birding between Mother's Day festivities. He found 134 species on Friday and 111 on Saturday, with a total for both days of 162 species.

“When I learned that the Birding Big Day had gone international, I knew that I had to participate — any excuse to go birding, right? San Blas has been my home for the past nine years, and I’ve been birding here for over 16 years. I believe it’s simply the best single location for birding north of Costa Rica — some have said it’s better than any single site in Costa Rica, or Panama, too. In the time I’ve been birding here, I’ve seen over 450 species of birds within 20 miles of my house.

“Even though May is past our prime birding season here, the birding is still pretty amazing. Besides, almost all the records for the San Blas area are from the high season of November through April; we still are discovering things that happen here during this time of year. The Birding Big Day served as motivation for me to get out and add more data to this under-birded season.

“The only problem I had was the fact that it was Mother’s Day weekend, with the actual Mother’s Day in Mexico being Friday, the first day of the event, so I had to fit my birding in between massive family celebrations. Well, I should accept a handicap, anyway. The birding is good enough to turn in a good list even in the few hours I could get away. So I dedicated all of Friday morning, and a couple
of hours before breakfast Saturday morning while everyone slept — off the Mother’s Day party, and then stole an hour and a half at the end of the day on Saturday.

**Part One — 10 May 2013**

“My morning started well on Friday, with a few birds recorded before I even left the house — Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl and Common Pauraque were calling outside of the house in the darkness, and were soon joined by the mournful calls of a Collared Forest-Falcon as the first light appeared in the east. As I was loading gear in my van, I saw and heard a whistling-duck flying low over the house. It sounded different than the common Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, so I grabbed my binoculars and got a view of it as it was heading out across the street. It was a Fulvous Whistling-Duck, an uncommon species here, and a new bird for my yard — species number 170 on that list. It was a great way to start.

**The first eBird list:** 14 species

“I finished loading up and headed out of town. My first stop was only a kilometer from the edge of town, where the remnant puddle of a drying lagoon held a few late shorebirds, along with some residents. Some lingering Stilt Sandpipers and dowitchers of both species were there, probing the mud, as well as a group of White Ibises doing the same. Least Terns and Mangrove Swallows flew low over the water, dipping occasionally to grab some creature. But the big attraction there was a flock of about 60 Wilson’s Phalaropes, which were feeding very actively, leap-frogging each other along the puddle and grabbing at the invertebrates concentrated in the shrinking body of water, obviously refueling from a night’s migration, and getting ready for the next. There had been phalaropes there for a couple of weeks, but I was intrigued that this flock was mostly males, whereas the previous flocks were mostly females. The reversal of the “normal” sex roles in this species is so complete that it extends even to the timing of migration.

**The second eBird list:** 29 species

“My next stop was only a few hundred meters to the east, at a famous place called Mirador de las Garzas (Overlook of the Herons). This lagoon has more water, and never dries completely. The deeper water reduces the number of small shorebirds there, but that is more than made up for by larger shorebirds, waterfowl, herons, egrets, Wood Storks, Roseate Spoonbills, Cormorants and more. It’s a very birdy place, and although there aren’t quite as many birds there at this time of year, I was still able to count 40 species in just 15 minutes.

**The third eBird list:** 40 species

“After that, I went a few kilometers further down the road south along the coast, and birded a short way off of the highway along two roads, the first that heads to the Crocodile Farm — a conservation center that raises crocodiles for release into our mangrove swamps, and the second a new highway under construction that dead-ends a short way inland. Both of these roads access a mix of fields, scrub, wetlands and some larger trees. I was able to find quite a few good birds on those roads — Least Grebe, various warblers, White-collared and Ruddy-breasted Seadeaters, and even birds of Indiana, such as Eastern Meadowlark and Red-winged Blackbird. Rufous-bellied Chachalacas were calling from several patches of woods. I found 46 species along the Crocodile Farm road, and 62 along the new highway.

**The fourth eBird list:** 46 species

**The fifth eBird list:** 61 species (+1 other taxa)
“By now it was approaching 8:00 a.m., and I wanted to spend much of what was left of the morning in the forested hills above the narrow coastal plain here. So I headed up a nearby road that goes up through mango orchards into some shade-grown coffee at the edge of a large forest preserve. It is a new site that we’ve only been birding for the last year. In spite of the fact that birders have been coming to San Blas for over 50 years, in the last five years we’ve discovered more excellent new birding areas than the total that were known by birders before these recent years. My destination here, and the main attraction of this location, was a spur of forested ridge where a lek of Long-billed (Mexican) Hermits was discovered a year ago.

“Along the way I passed through mixed woodlands filled with all manner of birds, including many species endemic to west Mexico. The Mexican-endemic birds that I picked up over the next three hours there were Rufous-bellied Chachalaca, Colima Pygmy-Owl, Citreoline Trogon, Golden-checked Woodpecker, Gray-crowned Woodpecker, Lilac-crowned Parrot, Flammulated Flycatcher, Golden Vireo, Black-throated Magpie-Jay, San Blas Jay, Sinaloa Crow, Happy Wren, Sinaloa Wren, Rusty-crowned Ground-Sparrow and Yellow-winged Cacique. Lots of other birds were there, too, like Elegant Trogon, Russet-crowned Motmot and Rose-throated Becard. A pair of the usually shy Crested Guans sat in a tree and competed with the chachalacas for “loudest bird in the forest” honors. A lone Black Hawk-Eagle, part of a small resident population isolated more than 1000 kilometers outside of the normal range for the species, soared high overhead. And the male Long-billed (Mexican) Hermits were there, chirping away on their lek, hoping to attract a passing female.

“I found a total of 66 species in the forest, some of which posed for photographs, and all of which were interesting and lovely.
The sixth eBird list: 66 species

“As I left there, I made a quick call home to see how the arrival of family members for the Mother’s Day celebration was going, and learned that I still had time to make a couple of quick stops on my way home. The first of these was the mouth of a stream, and the rocky beach where it enters the sea. A variety of sea and shorebirds like to hang out at this spot, and it’s a reliable place for a quick stop to add pelicans, cormorants, gulls, terns and others. But this morning a treat was in store for me, as three species of cormorants were there — the abundant Neotropical Cormorant, along with a rare Double-crested Cormorant, and shortly after I arrived, a very large cormorant flew in. It was a Brandt’s Cormorant, an extremely rare species for San Blas. Although a friend of mine had seen a Brandt’s Cormorant at that place earlier this year, it had eluded me, so this was a new bird for me for the San Blas area, and my “best” bird of the day.
The seventh eBird list: 46 species

“I made one more, quick stop on my way home, at a place where a small tidal channel in the mangroves crosses under the road. There I added two new species, Spotted Sandpiper, that had somehow eluded me so far that morning, and a large rail creeping through the mangroves that was a type occupying a taxonomic no-man’s-land between Clapper and King Rail. Both supposedly occur here, but the west Mexico subspecies of Clapper Rail is indistinguishable from King Rail, so I usually just call them “Cling” Rails, though for eBird purposes, I put them down as Clapper Rail. Someday someone will have to work out what’s happening with these rails here.
The eighth eBird list: 13 species

“I made it home by noon, having driven a total of 34 miles in the morning. I found 133 species of birds by noon that day — not too bad for “off” season birding in San Blas.
“I did manage to “steal” some birding during a family visit to the beach in the afternoon, where Sanderling was the only species new for the day that I saw, so I ended the day with a total of 134 species.

The ninth eBird list: 27 species

Part Two, Saturday, 11 May 2013

“With the whole of a very large family now here for the weekend, I was limited in the time I could get away for birding on this day. But since it was International Migratory Bird Day, I had to honor the day with at least a little birding. Luckily, most of the family were sleeping off the Mother’s Day party of the night before, and so were slow enough getting going in the morning to allow me to steal a couple of hours early. However, I myself was moving a bit slow, and didn’t get out the door until 7:00 a.m., well after sunrise. Nevertheless, I was able to put in a few productive hours before breakfast.

“The first place I went was to the main beach, Playa del Borrego, to take advantage of the good morning light to scope some off shore rocks. I was able to spot two birds I looked for, Brown Booby and Gray-breasted Martin, but saw no signs of a third, Bridled Tern, that I thought should be there. On my way out I stopped to bird some of the scrub behind the beach, and found one more new bird for my count, a Yellow-breasted Chat, among other expected species.

The tenth eBird list: 37 species

“I went back through town and out the north side, heading the opposite direction as I had the day before. This route passes through mangroves, shrimp farm lagoons and mixed fields and scrub. It can be very birdy.

“My first stop was a little spur road that goes 100 meters through the mangroves down to a boat landing on the San Cristobal River just a short way out of town. It’s a good place to find Mangrove Vireo, and I wasn’t disappointed. The vireo came in with a whole flock of warblers and other songbirds that also included Tropical Parula and the so-called “Mangrove” Warbler — a striking race of the Yellow Warbler. They were all trying to find the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl that was calling there. (Hint to the birds: it’s the really big, hairy one standing there with the binoculars!)

“I continued down the road, scanning the shrimp ponds for one with just the right water level — not too flooded, not too dry. A flock of noisy Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks and a flight of Laughing Gulls led me to the right spot — a pond being filled, but still with islands and patches of vegetation emerging. There were lots of ducks, some shorebirds, including a lone, late Marbled Godwit, and four species of terns — Least, Gull-billed, Royal and Elegant. A Green Kingfisher flew up the canal that ran alongside the pond.

“Moving farther down the road, I came to some fields and a corral — a place where I often find sparrows, seedeaters, meadowlarks and other open-country birds. A stop there produce a number of birds, such as a late Mourning Dove, Stripe-headed and Savannah Sparrows, and a variety of raptors, including Harris’s and Short-tailed Hawks and Crested Caracara.

“I had time for one more stop before heading home for breakfast, so I went down a dirt road that passes along a brush-lined canal until it opens up into agricultural land. I always seem to have good
luck there. It was fairly birdy, but even more impressive was the number of iguanas, of all sizes, sunning on the road. Down near the end of the lane I heard a familiar sound that I hadn't heard in a long time — a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. I soon found it in the brush across the canal. It was another bird that I had never before seen in San Blas — two such birds in as many days. The lack of Yellow-billed Cuckoo records in San Blas probably indicates how few people bird here in May, when they are likely to be migrating, than the actual rarity of that species.

“Shortly after that, I had another treat — a large flock of Wood Storks, about 200 total, took off from a nearby roost and flew low overhead, grabbing a thermal right over me, and wheeled higher and higher. It was a good way to end the pre-breakfast birding, and since it was approaching 9:30, it was time to head back in. I had managed 90 species in two and a half hours, all within a few miles of my house — not nearly as many as can be found during the winter, but a decent morning of birding nonetheless.

**The eleventh eBird list:** 83 species (+1 other taxa)

“I wasn’t quite through birding for the day, though. Our family outing to the beach in the afternoon was made more interesting by two Whale Sharks that were feeding just beyond the breakers. I set up my scope to watch them more closely. Eventually I made a scan of the same off shore rocks that I had checked in the morning, and this time I could see a couple of Bridled Terns.

“As dusk approached, I stole away to do some end-of-the-day birding, and headed to the new highway. I managed to add some new birds there, including Purple Gallinule, Limpkin, and as it got dark, Mottled Owl and Laughing Falcon. On my way back to town after dark, I stopped at Mirador de las Garzas and quickly found a Boat-billed Heron feeding. It was my last bird of the Birding Big Day(s). I finished my abbreviated birding on Saturday with 111 species, of which 28 were new from the day before. Added to the 134 from Friday, that gave me a two-day total of 162 species — the result of a couple of great days birding.

**The last three eBird lists:** 1 species, 54 species and 1 species

“Birding in San Blas is always good, and I'd love to have any of my fellow Earlhamites who wish to check it out to come visit. Just drop me a line, and we'll set up your own test to see if you agree that this is North America's best birding. I'd love to have you visit, and enjoy the fabulous birding we have here. Mark”

**COSTA RICA: Peñas Blancas and Monteverde area**

Ricardo Guindon '83
10 May 2013
124 species

Ricardo is a professional naturalist/guide in Monteverde. I’ve known him since the early 1970s when I was doing my doctoral field research in that community and he was a youngster! Later he was an Earlham student.

“Here’s what I came up with. I took advantage of the fact that I had not been birding in the Peñas Blancas river valley for several years and decided to start at the Eladios Refuge and bird back to Monteverde. Fortunately for me, Eladio was there cooking for a small group of students through the Monteverde Institute. So I had great meals and company for the night. We went out frog-watching
and I got to see my first *Agalychnis callidryas* in the Peñas Blancas valley. They had disappeared along with the Golden Toad and many other species of amphibians during the 1987-89 crash.

“The Big Day started fairly quietly as I walked the Pavones trail and puzzled at the many sounds that I’m not very familiar with or had years of not hearing. Identification was better when I got back out into the open area around the refuge. Just as I hear the call to breakfast I also hear the territorial call of the endemic Lattice-tailed Trogon so I ventured up the horse-trail to try to get a look and, fortunately, the bird moved down and let me get a nice look at him!

“After a delicious breakfast, I started the long 18-kilometer hike toward Monteverde. When I had good signal, I notified the Reserve via walkie-talkie that all was well and that I planned to be getting to the Entrance in afternoon. A minute after saying ‘over and out’ I see my first adult Fer-de-lance coiled only a meter or so from the trail! A nice reminder to keep always one eye on the trail and the other looking out for birds and that, next time, I should see if I can get a birding partner to join me on this kind of venture. My nervousness receded rapidly as a beautiful Ocellated Antbird crossed my path. Later, good looks at Blue-and Gold Tanager, Speckled Tanager and Emerald Tanager soothed any residues of misgiving. A great look at the Sunbittern incubating (you might say) 2 visible eggs by the Peñas Blancas River added to the enjoyment, subsequent to the first rain in weeks for the region. The other beautiful bird to enjoy by ear and by sight was the endemic Bare-necked Umbrellabird apparently displaying for another not-too-impressed male.

“In general, despite the brief periods of rain, the weather was beautiful for walking on a still very dry trail for a rain forest/cloud forest transition zone and the bird list shows how cooperative the birds were. I was able to identify some 18 endemic species to the Honduras-Colombia region most of which are only found from Nicaragua to western Panama. On Papa’s farm I could also hear the now resident calls of the Melodious Blackbird, species that wasn’t around when you were here studying the birds.

“Thanks for the opportunity to participate and thanks to all the pledgers and participants that allow us to feel a part of the Earlham experience. Lots of love from Costa Rica, Ricardo”