

## 2021 Blue Ridge Audubon Board of Directors At-Large Nominees

**John Koon** is an avid bird watcher and airline pilot. He already volunteers at Beaver Lake Bird Sanctuary. He and his daughter are refurbishing all the bird houses in the sanctuary.

*I am fairly open to work in whatever areas the organization need assistance. I bring experience in government affairs (having worked in both the Pentagon and US Embassies), social media, communications and public relations skills, computer skills, and coordinating activities across organizations and nationalities. Challenges in recent years regarding inclusion, diversity, climate change and the Migratory Bird Act have all highlighted Audubon initiatives and projects that are at the forefront of conservation efforts and renewed attention to accounting for historical and current biases in the world of bird conservation. I am eager to increase my role to help in each of these initiatives which I, along with my wife and teenage daughters, feel are paramount to address in the coming years to make the world and local community a better place for people and birds to live and thrive.*

**Yuhan (Douglas) Rao** is a climate scientist and Postdoctoral Research Scholar at the North Carolina Institute for Climate Studies. Plus, he's a birder!

*I have been bird watching since my college time in China. My experiences with bird watching and other environmental conservation interests led me to my current career pathway as a climate scientist. I am interested in becoming a board member of BRAC to contribute my skills in organizing and passion in diversity and inclusion to further the mission of BRAC. I am particularly interested in infusing DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) effort in education & conservation activities. I am a trained facilitator for environmental education and nature guide in China. I have led dozens of field trip and educational programs to the general public on environmental conservation with the focus on birds. I am also currently a North Carolina State University Impact Scholar focusing on expanding the societal impact of climate research, with particular interests in broad community engagement. I am mostly interested in the impact of climate change on birds, particularly birds in North Carolina.*

**Bonnie Snyder** attended Audubon North Carolina's Advocacy Day and talked with state legislators about several issues impacting birds. Bonnie's interested in serving on several committees, including EDI.

Bonnie's goals for serving on the board include: *Habitat protection and conservation; advocating for birds and the environment within our local government, communities and through education; teaching others about birds, how to attract them to backyard gardens, and the value that birds bring to our communities; and building relationships with our underserved communities to help ensure their participation in making our environment safe for birds as well as people.*

**Leslie Stewart** has extensive experience in non-profit organizations, has experience with other boards and grant writing. She's interested in serving on BRAC committees. *"My love of birds and the wild came from my dad and his family, all of whom are avid birders in Pennsylvania. I*

*have worked in the non-profit field for the past 16 years, with the last 8 years in non-profit leadership in Asheville. Most of those years were spent working to end homelessness and the last two years I have been working in holistic mental health care.”*

*On BRAC’s role in the community: Leading the region’s efforts to protect birds and their habitat and being a crucial member of the alliance of individuals and organizations doing the urgent work of conserving our natural resources and protecting the wild; instilling an appreciation of birds and the wild through community education and engagement; ensuring that leadership and participation are accessible to everyone, with specific efforts to include marginalized groups in our community.*