



April 2013 Newsletter

*Celebrating 56 Years
of Birding! 1957-2013*

NEXT MEETING:

**April 8, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

Last August, 2012, Mary Lou and Sid Barritt took a 9 day sail around the Galapagos Islands, and Mary Lou will show her photos taken from that trip. She has shared her photos previously with the bird club after a three week trip to Alaska in June, 2011. Mary Lou and Sid have been members of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club for about ten years. They have lived in Roanoke since 1975, and are mostly retired.

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March Meeting

Maureen Eiger presented a program on “Fascinating Feathers” describing shapes, how feathers get their colors, and how certain birds use them.

Try it, You Might Like It!

Big Spring Day (May 4th) is not just an event for experienced Roanoke Valley Bird Club birders. This is a great time for you who are new to the RVBC, new to birding, or have never done this before to discover new territories, new birds, and get to know fellow club members.

The event takes place, rain or shine. It is a bird census (actually counting the birds). We venture out in small groups to cover ten territories within a 7-1/2 mile radius of the Peaks of Otter. Only two of the groups require hiking. The other groups drive the areas, getting out of the car periodically to listen, look, and count. The leaders usually drive, so you will probably be carpooling.

If you are new to birding or to the RVBC, we will make sure you are with experienced birders. Even if you don't know the birds, your eyes and ears are helpful to spot the birds for others to identify.

Most groups start between 7:00 and 8:00 AM at locations chosen by the leaders. At noon, all participants gather at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Grounds for lunch and a tally. We do this census in conjunction with the Lynchburg Bird Club, who join us at noon for the tally. Bring your own food and drink.

After lunch, some groups go back out to finish their territory, search for a reported rarity, or just call it a day and head home.

Please join us – we need your help. Contact Eunice Hudgins (389-4056 or uvaau@aol.com). Let me know whether you prefer to hike or drive.

FIELD NOTES

On March 9, thirteen people birded Booker T. Washington National Monument, looking for nuthatches and other birds. 27 species were observed, including the Red-breasted Nuthatch, and the White-breasted Nuthatch. A Pine Warbler was also heard singing, and the group saw 6 Golden-crowned Kinglets.

On March 13, nine people attended the monthly walk at Greenfield Lake in Daleville. The group observed 35 species, including Redheads, 2 Wilson's Snipes, Tree Swallows, Brown Thrasher, American Kestrel, and Eastern Meadowlarks.

On March 23, four people searched for American Woodcocks at Claytor Nature Center in Bedford. The evening started with a thunderstorm, but before carpooling to Claytor, the storm ended and the night cleared. Two American Woodcocks were heard, and other highlights of the walk included hearing Great-horned Owls, many Spring Peepers, and Upland Chorus Frogs.

FIELD TRIPS

Chairperson

Laura Beltran (266-3773)

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

Poor Mountain and Bent Mountain Field Trip and Potluck, Saturday, April 13, 8:30 a.m.

Robin and Allen Austin (929-9071) invite members to meet at their home on Bottom Creek Road, Bent Mountain, to assemble for a birding trip to Poor Mountain. Little walking will be involved. Afterwards, we will gather at their home for a potluck. They will provide drinks and a meat entree; please bring a dish to share. If anyone is interested in continued birding after the potluck, we will bird Bottom Creek Road, which is easy walking but a greater distance than the morning. Don't miss this event! A good time is always had by all.

Monthly Mid-week Walk at the Cherry Blossom Trail, Botetourt County, Wednesday, April 17, 8:30 a.m.

Join Laura Beltran (266-3773) each month to see how the bird life changes from month to month. Off of 220 in Botetourt County, take the entrance to the Greenfield Education and Training Center (across from the entrance to Ashley Plantation).

Park at the SECOND parking lot for the Cherry Blossom Trail on the right. The trip involves mostly flat walking for about 2 miles.



Ovenbird, photo by Ed Kinser

Appalachian Dutch Oven Camping, Cooking, and Birding, Botetourt County, Saturday, April 20

Allen Austin (929-9071) is inviting bird club members to an outing with the Appalachian Dutch Oven meetup group. You may camp, cook, or just come for the birding! Go to the end of Warbler Road to the Middle Creek Campground. Campground use fees apply. Please contact Allen prior to joining for more details.

Birding along the Roanoke River, Roanoke County, Saturday, April 27, 8:00 a.m.

Kent Davis will lead us beside the Roanoke River at the trail that starts at the boat launch off Rutrough Road. At this time of year, we may see warblers, vireos, and other spring migrants. There is mostly flat walking for about 1 mile, with the choice of continuing further. We will meet at the Food Lion on Bennington Street. **Please note that there is a \$2/person charge to park and use this section of trail.**

Sightings

The following sightings were reported during the March 11 Roanoke Valley Bird Club meeting:

Jill Overstreet reported hearing **Great-Horned Owls**. She also saw a **Pileated Woodpecker**, an **Eastern Phoebe**, and an unidentified hawk with a squirrel. Robin Austin had **Red-winged Blackbirds** and an **American Kestrel** at her property. Carol Whiteside enjoyed seeing dozens of **Red-winged Blackbirds** at her home; **Black Vultures** were roosting above her pond. Mike Belcher was happy to see lots of **American Robins** and **Cedar Waxwings**. Butch Kelly heard **Barred Owls** from the Newport Road (Route 624) about a quarter-mile below the Montgomery County line. It sounded like they were at the base of Brush Mountain. Kent Davis saw four **Yellow-Crowned Night-Herons** on the Roanoke River Greenway at Smith Park, an **American Kestrel** in a Sycamore tree by the Roanoke River Greenway across from the soccer fields near the Roanoke Hospital, and one **Fox Sparrow** in his back yard. Mary Lou Barritt saw a **Northern Raven** in Roanoke City.

On March 17, Alyce and Timothy Quinn heard first of the season **Chipping Sparrows** at their house. They also discovered a small **Great Blue Heron** rookery on Hardy Road in Franklin County. It is on a small tributary of the Roanoke River where it divides Franklin and Bedford Counties. They observed three nests, with birds standing on two of them. Contact Alyce if you'd like a better description of where the rookery is located. On March 20, they also had an **Eastern Phoebe** on a nest under their deck, which was one day earlier than last year.

On March 21, Laurie and Scott Spangler saw a male **Brown-headed Cowbird** at their feeder despite the cold weather.

On March 23, Carol Burroughs had her first of the season **Louisiana Waterthrush** at a wet-weather stream in her backyard at the foot of Poor Mountain. Kent Davis also had a **Rusty Blackbird** at Greenfield Lake.

On the snowy morning of March 25, Maureen Eiger had a **Brown Thrasher** at her feeder.

Driving the Blue Ridge Parkway

Just a reminder that seat belt laws on the Blue Ridge Parkway are more strict since it is a federal road, not a state road. Seat belts must be worn by people of all ages in both the front and back of the vehicle to avoid being fined \$25 for frontseat belt violations and \$10 for backseat belt violations.

Save the Date for the Annual Picnic

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club's annual picnic will be on Sunday, August 11, 1 p.m. at Walrond Park in Roanoke. This year, our picnic will be combined with the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. BBQ and fried chicken will be provided, but please bring a side dish to share with about 30 people.

Attention Bluebird Monitors!

Anyone who signed up to monitor bluebirds this season please try to attend the April Bird Club meeting so that Alyce Quinn may give monitors their packets instead of spending money to send them. Additionally, Alyce would like to get feedback about the feeders built last year at one of the bird club meetings, specifically: Did people use them? Did birds use them? Did they fall apart? Please e-mail or call Alyce at twoquinns@yahoo.com or 719-0109.

Observers Needed for Ospreys

The Center for Conservation Biology is recruiting observers for OspreyWatch, a global effort to document breeding osprey. More information can be found at www.osprey-watch.org/.



Wild Bird Rehabilitation Needs: The Season Begins!

- Tissues, Tissues, did I say tissues?
- Paper towels
- Wooden dowels
- Plastic storage bins, shoe box size to large tubs with covers.
- Cat / Dog crates/ bird cages (cleaned please) any size
- Food: sugar, maple syrup, grape jam, peanut butter very small fine seed –(finch birdseed that has very small thistle seeds in it), black oil seed / peanuts (can stick some in a plastic bag), summer suet cakes – peanut or with mealworm flavors, Mourning Dove food (found at Petco), millet sprigs (found at pet stores/Wal-Mart), when you have ripe apples/pears or extra fruit in your garden please share....If you find Gypsy moth or any other hatched bagworms. paper bag them and call me for pick up!
- Tree bark strips
- Bags of pea gravel (please deliver to my home) for outdoor cages
- Small logs with holes. (Natural or drilled holes)
- Small sized bird feeders and birdhouses to put in outdoor cages
- Cleaning supplies: Dawn dish detergent, sponges, tall (13 gal) plastic trash bags, bleach, white vinegar – clean rags/old towels
- Clean spray bottles for misting birds.
- Need a tax write off? Money! Monetary donations for medicines are always appreciated. Cash or checks, tax receipts will be provided.



Tufted Titmouse, *photo by Maureen Eiger*

•Any gift amounts on Kroger/Wal-Mart gift cards (for fresh fruit and berries). Again, tax receipts will be provided.

Maybe it's the price of gas or "but it's just a bird" mentality, but there is a shortage of transporters- I need people who are willing to pick up orphaned, sick or injured birds from people that live too "far away" and/or can't drive and bring them to me or meet me somewhere close to Roanoke. Unfortunately, I can't leave my house to travel very far during baby bird season because of the intense feeding schedules; every 20-30 minutes. Transporters are needed to drive to Bedford, Blue Ridge, Botetourt, Franklin County, Martinsville, the NRV area or Lynchburg to pick up the bird and bring it to me or meet me somewhere close. There aren't any baby bird rehabbers in those areas so you are saving a bird's life! Please call or e-mail meiger@cox.net if you have some free time. I would like to have a list of people who might want to do it. No commitment, you can say no if it is inconvenient (but you might be available to do it another time). Do you know someone who commutes back and forth to any of these places? Please ask them if they wouldn't mind a "bird in a box" as company on their way back to Roanoke.

On behalf of all the baby birds that need help (and me too), we appreciate any donations. Thanks!

-Maureen

Maureen's Birding Almanac

April is here and it is time to think of plants and other natural food sources for your birds.

Make sure you plant native species. They have better nutrients for your feathered friends. Even scientists are proving that native plants are healthier for birds. So check out some bird books and internet sources to find what flower, bush, or tree attracts which species. Make sure they are native plants to Virginia, not another country or state.

If you don't have room or don't want to dig, try hanging baskets. Photo opportunities abound when hummingbirds drink from flowers in baskets (think

RVBC's Bird Calendar photo winners).

When cleaning out your garden area leave a small brush pile in a corner for cover and nesting. A pile of small thin twigs, and grasses makes for easy nest pickings. Also, any tree/bush pruning or brush cleaning should be done now so you don't run into a bird starting a new nest.

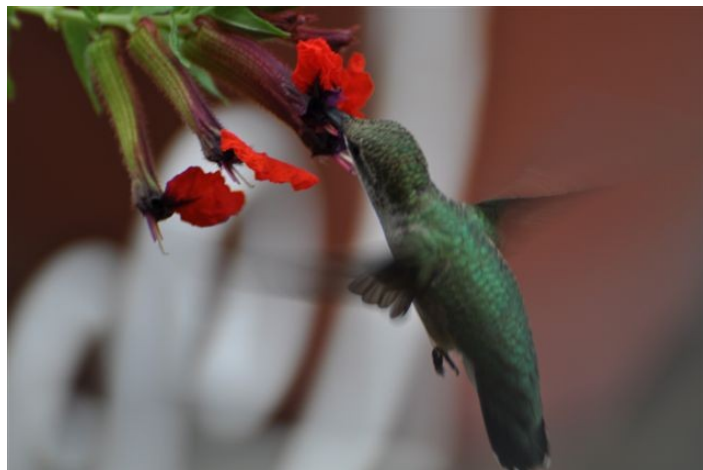
Water will still be important, so keep birdbaths clean. Maybe add a few more water sources. I stuck an old toilet bowl top under my gutter drain spout. This rectangular section (upside down) makes a good shallow bath and small birds use it often.

Leaving your feeders up and switching to "summer" suet will help make it easier for migrants to find food after their long journey. Some birds will also like orange or apple slices. "Forgotten" brown bananas attract insects for birds to eat. You can stick your fruit in a suet basket or place fruit on the ground and attract Flickers and other ant loving birds. Try putting out grape jelly in a cup and see who visits. Soaked raisins are a favorite of Bluebirds, Catbirds and Robins. Once in a while my neighborhood Towhees come out in the open for a quick snack too.

Hummingbird feeders should be put out now. Make your own syrup – one part cane sugar to four parts water with no food coloring. Warm this in the microwave and stir until the sugar is dissolved. I make extra and refrigerate it. If you change your sugar syrup about every 3-4 days it will not get black mold and will be easier to keep clean. I have two feeders and just swap them out. I don't fill them up all the way, just enough to last the 3-4 days. By swapping them I don't get buzzed by mad Hummingbirds missing their feeder! If it is the first time you are putting out a hummingbird feeder or decided to change last years' feeder position, tie a few red ribbons around the new area. It will draw the Hummingbirds to the feeder sooner.

Enjoy the spring weather and the new birds at your home. If you find a bird in trouble or have a bird question don't forget to give me a call. I hope your spring will be joyous with bird voices!

-Maureen Eiger
(Category IIA, State and Federal Migratory Bird Permitted.)



Ruby-throated Hummingbird, *photo by Maureen Eiger*

Meet a Member: David Brunstetter

Each month, a member is randomly chosen for a brief "interview" for our newsletter so we may learn new things about our members. David Brunstetter answered a few questions for our April newsletter:

How long have you been in the Roanoke Valley bird club? "About a half year."

Besides birding, what other hobbies do you have? "About a year and a half ago, I simultaneously took up both birding and photography. I have always enjoyed the outdoors and found both hobbies to be an excellent excuse to wander around in the woods."

What other role do you have in the bird club (board membership, CBC tally, hawk counts, etc.)? "I participate in the Hawk Count at Harvey's knob and team up with David Kirk for the Winter Raptor Counts."

If you work, what do you do? "Though originally a geologist, I somehow managed to become a Psychiatrist. I work in community based outpatient clinics for the Salem VA."

Where are you from? "I was born in San Francisco. I have spent various amounts of time in California, Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, Washington, Arizona, North Carolina, and DC. We have lived in Roanoke for the last 16 years."

