



March Newsletter

Next meeting Monday
March 9th, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

Grandin Court Baptist Church
2660 Brambleton Ave SW. Roanoke, VA 24015

Before the meeting please join fellow club members at 5:30 p.m.
for dinner at the Brambleton Deli, 3655 Brambleton Ave.

Celebrating 58 Years
of Birding!
1957-2015

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

"Growing up Bluebird"- program
A Bird Word
Field Trips
Trending on the Internet
Bird Sightings
Bird Tip – Alpha Codes for Birds
Club Events, Projects & News -
Bluebird Monitoring sign up!
Bird Topic – Owls
Membership Renewal Form

Deadline for submissions to be included in the next RVBC newsletter are due by the 20th of the month preceding the next publication month. Thank you! Please send photos (in medium resolution or smaller) and submissions or suggestions to RVBC Newsletter Editor, Maureen Eiger at rvbcnews@cox.net

Hyperlinks have now been added. You can click on the underlined link and it should take you there. Use it for sending email or to get internet and website information. Visit our web page for past newsletters and current information at:
<http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com>

NEW! - Visit and "like" the Roanoke Valley Bird Club's Facebook page.

Growing up Bluebird

By Maureen Eiger



See what goes on in a Bluebird nest box. Learn about some of the reasons why nesting attempts are unsuccessful. How do bird rehabbers take care of nestlings and fledgling Bluebirds that are orphaned? State and Federally Permitted Bird Rehabber and RVBC member, Maureen Eiger will show you some up close and personal video and photos of a most beloved bird, the Eastern Bluebird.

This month's meeting refreshments will be graciously provided by
CARL and LINDA BOAST

Please Bring A Box Of Tissues and/or A Roll A Paper Towels To Help Save Baby Birds.

A Bird Word - Do you know what a **TOTIPALMATE FOOT** is? Hint – It is mostly seen in some water birds such as pelicans, gannets, and boobies. Answer is on page 3.



EVENING WOODCOCK WALK – SATURDAY, MARCH 7th at 5:30PM

Meet with Linda Cory (580- 5214) at the South County Library on Merriman Road for a walk around the lower level boardwalk. Wear sturdy shoes for walking from the parking lot to the boardwalk below. The boardwalk is a 1/2 mile of level walking. Towards dusk, we will return to the parking lot which overlooks the marsh area to look and listen for woodcocks.

GREENFIELD BIRDS – SATURDAY, MARCH 21st at 8:30AM

Join Linda Cory (580-5214) and Kent Davis (355-6388) for a walk around Greenfield Lake also known as the Cherry Blossom Trail. This is a great walk for the whole group because you can either take the whole hike including the upper second pond or just bird from one of the many benches next to the lake. The total walk is two miles of mostly level walking with a couple moderate hills. Scopes are welcomed!

Greenfield is located on Route 220 in Botetourt County. Directions: Take Exit 150B on I81 and then a right onto Route 11 for a quarter mile. Take a right onto Route 220N. Go 3.8 miles and take a left at 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.

STP AND MORE - SUNDAY, MARCH 29th at 8:00 AM

Join Linda Cory at 8AM at the Lower Level Towers Parking lot next to Sun Trust Bank. Carpooling is recommended and we will caravan to the Roanoke Sewage Treatment Plant. This walk is on Sunday because it is the only day that construction will not be taking place at the facility. Entrance to the STP is by special permit only and we must enter as a group. Please RSVP to Linda at (580-5214) before 9PM on 3/26/15 so we can give a head count to the STP office. After the STP, we will bird at the end of Rutrough Road on the Roanoke River. We may also bird Smith Park on Wiley Drive if time permits.



EAGLE ROCK & SALISBURY FURNACE -SATURDAY, APRIL 11th at 7:30AM

Meet educator Bill Hunley (774-2397) for a special field trip to Salisbury Furnace in the Eagle Rock and James River area. We can expect to see waterfowl (especially wood ducks), warblers, such as the yellow-throated warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush and more. There is always a possibility for ospreys and bald eagles. Dating back to the mid 1800's, Salisbury Furnace is also a good location for wildflowers. We will also visit the confluence of the James and Craig Creek. Meet near the Bojangles at Botetourt Commons in Daleville off 220N.

BIRDING REQUEST

The Virginia Society of Ornithology will have its 2015 Breeding Bird Foray in Franklin County. I have volunteered to be coordinator for this year. The Foray dates are June 6th through June 14th. I thought I would check in with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club members for your thoughts, on interesting places for folks to bird watch. The local, state and federal parks are some of the places I have in mind. But I'd like to compile a list of landowners willing for folks to bird during this time.

Also are there any species of birds you would like to have as a focus? Over the years, I have been fascinated with the Blue-headed Vireos that are found in late spring and summer in low elevation areas, particularly along Smith River and Philpott Lake, on over to Ferrum. Summer Tanager is another one I'd like more info on as far as local status goes during nesting season. There are scattered populations of Cerulean Warblers, mainly along the escarpment. I'm also wondering how well the grassland/farmland species are doing such as Vesper, and Savannah Sparrows, and Horned Larks.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Good birding, Clyde

Clyde Kessler can be contacted at <mailto:ckessler@vt.edu>

Trending around the Internet: For anyone who bought the second edition of The Sibley Guide when it was first published, only to be disappointed by color reproduction and type readability. The publisher, Knopf (a division of Random House), is offering a free replacement with the much improved second printing. For more information go to: http://www.birderslibrary.com/news/book_news/sibley-guide-2nd-edition-free-replacement.htm

If you find a good web site or article to share, send a link to rvbcnews@cox.net

Sightings

✓ MENTIONED BY RVBC MEMBERS ATTENDING THE FEBRUARY MEETING

- ✓ Jill Overstreet has Brown-headed Nuthatches coming to her feeders. She also has a Cooper's Hawk in her yard.
- ✓ Barry Whitt saw American Wigeons and Buffleheads on the New River.
- ✓ Elly Wefel saw a Rough-legged Hawk in Fincastle
- ✓ Nancy and Bob Luce saw both male and female Common Loons on Smith Mountain Lake.
- ✓ Linda Cory had Pine Siskins at her house in Roanoke County.

Bird Tip – Using Alpha Codes for Listing Birds

Alphabetic (“alpha”) codes, abbreviations of English or scientific bird names, have long been employed by ornithologists.

They allow quicker data entry than filling out the full English or scientific name of a species and they can also serve to cross-check other recorded names or numeric data. The basic codes were derived from a simple set of rules for reducing a name to four letters. Here is a summary of the basic rules:

A handwritten list of birds and their alpha codes from a field notebook. The list is titled '2014' and '6080 N WATERBURY N.P.' and contains 28 entries. The alpha codes are listed to the right of the bird names. Some entries have asterisks next to them.

Bird Name	Alpha Code
1. Downy Woodpecker	
2. Red-bellied Woodpecker	
3. Amer. Goldfinch	1-1-14
4. White-breasted Nuthatch	
5. N. Cardinal	1-2-14
6. Canada Goose (Bywater)	1-3-14
7. Crow (Plover)	
8. Bald Eagle (Plover) *	1-4-14
9. Blue Jay	
10. Black-capped Chickadee	
11. Dark-eyed Junco	2-10-14
12. House Sparrow	
13. Amer. Robin	
14. House Finch	
15. Carolina Wren	
16. White-throated Sparrow	
17. Barred Owl (heard)	1-25-14
18. Tufted Titmouse *	2-2-14
19. Brown Creeper	2-22-14
20. E. Starling	3-4-14
21. Turkey Vulture	3-25-14
22. Brown-headed Cowbird	4-6-14
23. Herring Gull (Bywater) *	4-6-14
24. Red-tailed Hawk (Bywater)	4-10-14
25. Chipping Sparrow	4-10-14
26. Herring Dove	4-13-14
27. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	4-14-14
28. Mallard Duck *	4-27-14

- If the name is one word, the code is the first four letters.
 - SORA Sora
 - DICK Dickcissel
- If the name is two unhyphenated words, the code is the first two letters of each word.
 - MODO Mourning Dove
 - AMRO American Robin
- If the name is two words, with the last word hyphenated, the code is the first two letters of the first word and the first letter of each part of the hyphenation.
 - EASO Eastern Screech-Owl
 - EAWP Eastern Wood-Pewee

- If the name is two words, with the first word hyphenated, or simply three words, the first two letters of the code are the first letter of each of the first two parts of the hyphenation or of each of the first two words, and the second two letters of the code are the first two letters of the last word, or the third part of the hyphenation.
 - GCFL Great Crested Flycatcher
 - GTGR Great-tailed Grackle
 - RTHU Ruby-throated Hummingbird
 - RTHA Red-tailed Hawk
 - CWWI Chuck-will's-widow
- If the name has four parts, either separate words or hyphenated parts, the code is the first letter of each part
 - BCNH Black-crowned Night-Heron
 - NRWS Northern Rough-winged Swallow

A major problem is that the rules can create “collisions”; cases where two (or more) different names reduce to the same four letters. In these cases, different codes had to be created ad hoc. Unfortunately, if you want to use the codes, you simply must memorize these special cases. Go to <http://www.birdpop.org/alphacodes.htm> to find the most current lists.

BIRD WORD ANSWER – a TOTIPALMATE FOOT is when all the toes are connected by webs. The more usual arrangement among aquatic birds is where the hallux is free of webbing. In birds with totipalmate feet this 'hind' toe points forward like the others and all the toes are webbed.



Events, Projects and Club News



BLUEBIRD MONITORING SIGN-UP

Come to the RVBC March meeting to sign up to help monitor nest boxes on our three bluebird trails. Our trails are along the Blue Ridge Parkway from Rt. 460 to just south of Rt. 220, at Hanging Rock Golf Course in Salem, and at Botetourt Golf and Swim Club in Troutville. We monitor weekly from April to August, and it's up to you how many times you'd like to monitor and on which trail.

Some people prefer to only monitor a couple of times all season, others enjoy it so much they sign up for twice a month. Some work on only one trail, others on all three. Monitoring is done sometime Friday through Monday and takes a couple of hours.

If you've never tried it before and would like to go out with someone who can "show you the ropes," we can arrange that.

The deadline for signing up is March 10. Please either plan to sign up at the March meeting or contact Alyce Quinn at 540-719-0109 or twoquinns@yahoo.com. Be prepared to let her know if there are days you are unavailable to monitor (like a vacation you have planned).

WELCOME NEW ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB MEMBERS:

Lindsay Eades (who also adopted a bluebird) and Dick Grubb (who found us on the internet)

WILDBIRD REHAB REQUEST: Here is a partial list of needs and supplies to help rehabilitate baby birds this year.



Tissues, paper towels, bleach and Dawn (original Dawn)
Clean and in good condition, cat or dog crates/carriers. Bird cages
Window Screening (nylon) or garden shade cloth (need lots)
Bark and small logs
Wooden dowels
Mealworms, Crickets and Gypsy Moth Webs
Natural fruits and pokeberries
Have any fruit trees/berries/apples in your yard? Please call when ripe
Shallow glass or ceramic dishes - Ashtrays are perfect
Gift cards to grocery stores for fruits and veggies for the birds
Thank you! **Call Maureen at 342-4890 to arrange pick up of large items or bring them to any RVBC meeting.**

Feeding Crushed Chicken Eggshells To Birds - Add Calcium To Their Diet For Breeding Season.

Preparation: You need to sterilize the chicken eggshells first in case they are contaminated with bacteria. They will also break up more easily if dried. You can use an oven or microwave. Don't overcook them, as they will burn and smell like sulfur. UGH! Monitor them so this does not happen. Times are approximate.

OVEN: Put them on a cookie sheet in a 250 F degree oven for 10 minutes until dry, but not brown. (Note: some people use a 350 F oven and less time)

MICROWAVE: put them on a covered plate or paper towel in the microwave on high for about 1 to 3 minutes (for a dozen, go 3-4 minutes.) If you don't rinse them first, be prepared for some loud popping noises from residual egg whites.

Then break into small pieces - don't worry too much about the size but you want it to be big enough for them to pick up with their beak and small enough to swallow. If you cooked them in the microwave on a paper towel, just crunch it up. You can use a blender/processor to get a finer powder to mix with suet or to toss in your mealworm bins.

Store extras in a paper bag. Scatter crushed eggshells on sidewalks, patios, deck railing, a rock, or driveways - anywhere birds can see and find them.

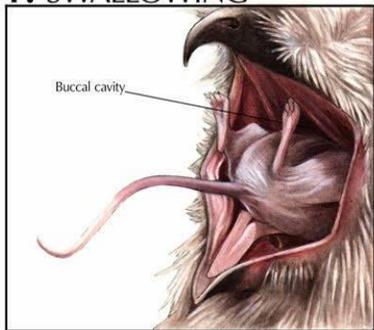
Or mix your finely crushed eggshells with some bird seed and put in a bird feeder.

Bird Topic – Owl Facts

Owls lack a crop, the throat pouch where other birds store food prior to digestion. Food goes down the esophagus to the proventriculus, a stomach-like organ, where enzymes, acids and mucus begin to break the food down. Next stop is the gizzard, or ventriculus, which separates out the indigestible parts, like bones, teeth and fur, which will be regurgitated later as grayish-white, sausage-shaped pellets or "castings", within about 12 to 24 hours of feeding. The act of casting signals that the bird is ready to feed again.

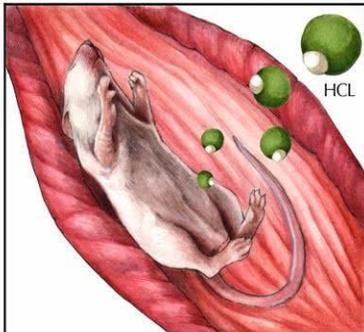
How Owls Form a Pellet *An Illustrated Study*

1. SWALLOWING



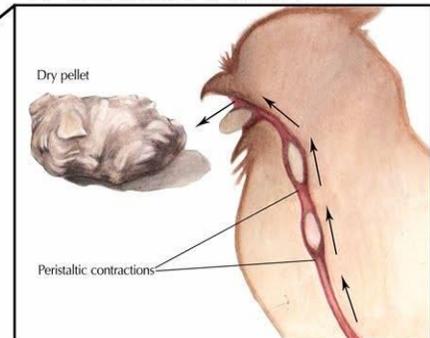
Food is forced into the back of the buccal, or oral, cavity, where a series of muscle contractions, or peristalsis, at the top of the esophagus pull it down through the rest of the esophagus into the proventriculus.

2. PROVENTRICULUS



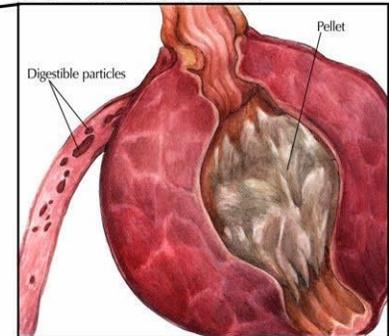
The proventriculus, also known as the first stomach, receives the food from the esophagus and secretes mucus, hydrochloric acid (HCL), and pepsinogen, preparing the food for the move into the ventriculus.

4. REGURGITATION



After a period of about 8-10 hours, the pellet travels from the ventriculus back up to the proventriculus, where peristalsis forces the pellet up through the esophagus and out of the mouth. Pellet formation is complete, and the mass of fur/bones/etc becomes the dry pellet that is often collected for educational dissection.

3. VENTRICULUS



The ventriculus, also known as the gizzard, receives the food from the proventriculus. Lined with several tough, thick layers of muscle, the gizzard acts as the avian equivalent of teeth as it grinds and pushes the food within the inner chamber. Digestible materials are separated and passed on into the small intestine, while the remaining indigestible mass of fur and bone is left to form the pellet.

Owls are not fast fliers, with a top speed of about 40 mph. However an owl's flight is silent, due to "fluting" features of the primary wing feathers, which are serrated and resemble a comb's teeth. While most large birds cause a noisy turbulence as the air moves over their pumping wings, the owl's feather fluting breaks the sounds into thousands of smaller sounds not audible to the ears of mammals. In addition, while other birds preen their wings to hook the ends of their feathers together, so they can fly more efficiently, owls do not. What they lose in speed as a result, they make up in stealth, because the dissipation of the turbulence is further enhanced. As the owl drops from its perch and glides towards the sound, silent flight also enables the continuous and increasingly more accurate audible triangulation of the prey's location as the owl closes in.

Great horned owls are the weight lifters of the raptors, and can fly while carrying prey equal to 1.4 times their own weight. If their prey is not killed instantly by the puncture and pressure of the talons, horny pads under the owl's toes allow the owl to control the struggling prey, as the owl flies to a secure perch. Smaller prey is swallowed whole, while larger prey is torn into manageable chunks, using the beak and talons. The forward talon on the great horned owl has a serrated edge, like a ginsu knife, which helps the owl dismember large prey by sinking its talons.

Note: A GREAT HORNED OWL'S TALONS HAVE ABOUT 250PSI CRUSHING POWER, WHICH IS ALMOST ENOUGH TO CRUSH A FULL SODA CAN (ALSO AS STRONG AS A GERMAN SHEPHERD'S BITE).



The Roanoke Valley Bird Club

C/o Eleanor Dye
P.O. Box 74
Vinton, Virginia 24179

2015 Roanoke Valley Bird Club Membership Application Form

Please print

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____

ST: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Memberships expire on August 31 each year

Annual Dues are as follows:

- Individual \$12
- Family \$20
- Student \$7
- Sustaining \$30
- Adopt a Bluebird \$15

Additional Contribution \$ _____

Total Submitted _____

Make check payable to
Roanoke Valley Bird Club
Mail To: Roanoke Valley Bird Club
C/o Eleanor Dye
P.O. Box 74
Vinton, VA 24179-0074