



March 2013 Newsletter

*Celebrating 56 Years
of Birding! 1957-2013*

February Meeting

Dr. Paul Stewart DVM, owner of the Avian and Exotic Pet Clinic, gave a talk on bird diseases and the importance of keeping birdfeeders and areas under them, as well as birdbaths, clean.



INSIDE:

<i>Raptor Count Results</i>	2
<i>Sightings</i>	3
<i>Field Notes</i>	3
<i>Photo of Greenfield</i>	3
<i>Field Trips</i>	3
<i>Big Spring Day</i>	4
<i>Birding Almanac</i>	4
<i>Bluebird Monitor Sign up</i>	5
<i>Bird Rehab Needs</i>	5
<i>Meet a Member</i>	5
<i>Birding Competition</i>	5

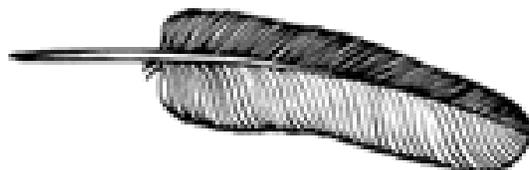
NEXT MEETING:

**March 11, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

Maureen Eiger will present “Fascinating Feathers” at our March meeting. All birds have feathers, but why do they come in different colors, shapes and sizes? Learn how feathers get their color. Learn which birds use feathers as “tools”. What bird has poison feathers? What bird can be its own little copper mine? Are blue feathers really blue? We will learn some unusual facts and uses for feathers by birds. Several (legal) feather examples will be available for close inspection.

Maureen Eiger is an avid bird watcher and Board Member of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club. She is also a State and Federally Permitted Wild Bird Rehabilitator, so please bring a box of tissues or roll of paper towels to the meeting to help save a baby bird. Thank you!

PLEASE NOTE: We need someone to provide refreshments for our **May** meeting.



2013 Raptor Count Results

We had a great turnout for this year's Raptor Count on Saturday Feb. 9. Eight teams, consisting of eighteen people, searched for raptors. Over 800 raptors were observed. Dave Brunstetter and David Kirk were the winners for this year, and sighted the only

Eastern Screech Owl. Bill and Katie James had the most Turkey Vultures, scoring ten bonus points. Judy and John Loope scored bonus points as well for seeing the most Black Vultures. Thank you for the great participation, and I look forward to next year.

-Anne Tucker

SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TEAM H
TURKEY VULTURE	28	72	100	32	34	22	1	89
BLACK VULTURE	14	20	21	57	35		20	50
RED-TAILED HAWK	14	23	21	28	36	10	7	3
AMERICAN KESTREL	2	9	3	6	9	1		3
SCREECH OWL					1			
RAVEN	3		1					
COOPER'S HAWK		1		2	1			1
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK			1					
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE		1						
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK		3		1				1
GREAT HORNED OWL								
BARRED OWL								
BARN OWL								
NORTHERN HARRIER								
SHORT-EARED OWL								
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK								
GOLDEN EAGLE					3			
BALD EAGLE		2			4			
PEREGRINE FALCON								
MERLIN								
GOSHAWK								
LONG-EARED OWL								
SAW-WHET OWL								
NORTHERN SHRIKE								
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR	1	1	3	3			1	
TOTAL BIRDS	62	132	150	129	123	33	29	147
TOTAL POINTS	181	540	282	377	894	82	81	195

*** RECEIVED 10 BONUS POINTS FOR PEAK COUNTS

TEAM A - Laurie & Scott Spangler - Botetourt County & Bedford County

TEAM B - Joyce Holt, Liz Williams, Eunice Hudgins & Millie Smith - Salem, Roanoke, Craig & Bedford Counties

TEAM C - Katie & Bill James, Roanoke, Bedford and Botetourt Counties

TEAM D - Judy & John Loope - Craig, Botetourt & Roanoke Counties

TEAM E - Dave Brunstetter, David Kirk - Roanoke, Botetourt, Rockbridge, Bath and Highland Counties

TEAM F - Kent Davis & Mike Smith - Roanoke & Botetourt Counties

TEAM G - Robin & Allen Austin - Bent Mountain area

TEAM H - Bill & Anne Tucker - Franklin, Pittsylvania and Bedford Counties, around SML

Sightings

Nancy Young, the Wefels, and Laura Beltran have been seeing Pine Siskins at their feeders regularly since December. Nancy has seen about 20 or 30 a day. Nancy Young also stated, "I heard the song of the Black-capped Chickadee on two different days just down the street. I saw the bird once but not clearly enough to make a positive ID."

David Kirk and David Brunstetter drove up to Highland County for the Winter Raptor Count. They spied two juvenile Golden Eagles and David Brunstetter sent this photo:



FIELD NOTES

On February 11, 8 people enjoyed a walk at Greenfield Lake in Botetourt County. Highlights included a Lesser Scaup, Horned Grebe, Wilson's Snipe, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, along with a lot of other waterfowl. On February 13, Alyce Quinn led 10 people to area ponds for waterfowl, with highlights including a pair of Wood Ducks on Murray's Pond, Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Scaup species at Greenfield Lake, Buffleheads, Hooded Mergansers on the pond at Botetourt Golf and Swim Club, and lots of Ring-necked Ducks at all ponds.

Beautiful Photo of Greenfield Lake

Jon Beard took the Master Naturalist course this past fall, and he went to Greenfield Lake for the first time on one of the course's field trips. As a photographer, he was excited to be introduced to the area, and took a beautiful nighttime photo. To see the photo, go to: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jonbeard/8397776951/in/photostream/lightbox>.

FIELD TRIPS

Chairperson

Laura Beltran (266-3773)

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

Booker T Washington National Monument, Saturday, March 9, 9 a.m.

Join leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) for an easy mile of walking in search of woodland birds, including all three nuthatches (brown-headed, red-breasted, and white-breasted nuthatches). You may meet Bill at the Monument at 9:00 a.m. when the gate opens. However, if you wish to carpool from Roanoke by meeting at Tanglewood Mall under the Tanglewood Mall sign at 8 a.m., please call Laura Beltran (266-3773) by Friday, March 8, since she will not be carpooling from that location and would need to coordinate with other participants.

Monthly Mid-week Walk at the Cherry Blossom Trail, Botetourt County, Wednesday, March 13, 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.

Listening for Woodcocks, Claytor Nature Center, Bedford, Saturday, March 16, 6:30 p.m.

Join Laura Beltran (266-3773) as we listen for woodcocks in the fields of Claytor Nature Center in Bedford. We will carpool from the Bonsack Kroger (meet in the parking lot closest to the Kroger gas station side) at 5:30 p.m. and carpool from there.

Big Spring Day on May 4

Late April through mid-May in the mountains of Virginia is about as good as it gets for spring birding. Migrating birds are heading north from the tropics to northern breeding grounds. Birds that spend the entire year here are setting up territories and pairing up to breed which makes them more active, vocal, and easier to observe in their bright spring plumages.

Each spring at the height of this migration, we team up with the Lynchburg Bird Club to do a census of birds in our area (**Big Spring Day**). The count (yes, we count each and every bird), done **rain or shine**, centers around the Peaks of Otter and covers specific territories within a 7-1/2 mile radius of the Peaks.

Small groups are assigned to each of the territories. Most of the areas require very little or no walking (driving the territory and stopping when you see activity or just walking short distances from your car to observe and listen). A couple of the territories require hiking for several hours. We attempt to include at least one experienced birder with every team. This is a great opportunity for beginning birders – your eyes and ears can help locate birds while others can assist in the identification.

Teams start between 7:00 and 8:00 AM. At noon, all participants gather at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Grounds for lunch and a tally of what has been seen. Bring your own food and drink. After lunch, teams go back and finish their territory, search for a reported rarity, or just call it a day and head home.

Please join us for a fun day of birding. It's an opportunity to meet new birders, discover new birding territories, and maybe see a bird you have never seen before. To participate, contact Eunice Hudgins (389-4056 or uvaau@aol.com). Let me know if you prefer to drive or hike.



Red-bellied Woodpecker
Photo by Ed Kinser



Maureen's Birding Almanac

March is here and nesting season is just beginning! This is a good month to clean out bird boxes if you haven't already. You will also probably find remains (poop!) that are from birds using the boxes for winter roosting. So keep an eye on that and keep them clean.

March is also a good time to think about nesting material for your birds. For your neighborhood Robins, a "mud pile" in a shallow area (kept wet) is much appreciated. You may also expose some dirt near your gutter's drainpipe to get wet. Start collecting dog hair, your hair and small short (about 1 inch) pieces of cotton string. Shredded mulch, moss and lichens are also favorite nesting materials of birds. You can stuff everything in an empty suet feeder or an open weave basket and hang it where you can watch the birds pull out what they need. Tufted Titmice, Chickadees and Wrens will thank you. I put my nesting material out early so that it "weathers" some because the birds seem to prefer it.

Also, this is a good time to "recycle". Think of tying some shallow baskets in bushes or maybe an old shoe nailed to a post and see what happens. Create a ledge for a Robin or Mourning Dove nest. Also leaving small piles of longer grasses or skinny twigs will help your feathered friends make a home.

Bluebird Monitor Sign-Up

Alyce Quinn is currently taking volunteers to help monitor the club's three bluebird trails. Our trails are along the Blue Ridge Parkway from 460 to just south of 220, at Hanging Rock Golf Course in Salem, and at Botetourt Golf and Swim Club in Troutville. We monitor from late March through early August, and it's up to you how many times you monitor and where. Some people choose to only go out once, others enjoy it so much they sign up for twice a month. Some work only on one trail, others on all three. 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. Monitors check the boxes weekly (any time from Friday through Monday of their assigned week), looking for eggs, nestlings and predation. If there are nestlings, we ask you to estimate their age (we give you descriptions of what they look like at all stages of their lives). It's a fun time, so if you've never done it, think about giving it a try. If you've monitored previously, we hope you'll do so again this year.

The deadline for signing up is March 12. Please either plan to attend the March meeting to sign up or call Alyce at 719-0109 or email her at two-quinns@yahoo.com before that date. And please be prepared to let her know if there are days you are unavailable to monitor.

Wild Bird Rehabilitation Needs



If you would like to donate any of the following items for wild bird rehabilitation, please bring them to the next bird club meeting. Thank you.

- Sugar
- Suet
- Glass Candle Lids
- Sushi trays
- Tree bark
- Bamboo sticks
- Wooden dowels
- Lots of tissues
- Small shallow ashtrays—glass is fine
- Deep (1 inch) plastic lids off of jars (like peanut butter jars)
- Low baking dishes (no Teflon coating) (think mini swimming pools/bird baths)



Meet a Member: Laura Beltran

Each month, a member is chosen for a brief "interview" for our newsletter so we may learn new things about our members. Eunice Hudgins submitted the following about Laura Beltran for our readers.

"When Laura began sending e-mails from natureinvestigations@gmail.com, I became very curious so I "googled" Nature Investigations. What a lovely surprise to learn so many interesting things about one of our newer members. Please, go on line and get acquainted with our Laura.

The bird club is so fortunate to have a member who pitches in and volunteers. Laura is a RVBC Board member, Publications Chairman (publishing our monthly newsletter) and the club's field trip leader. She filled in as VP of Programs when Bill Grant passed away and appeared on television to help boost our seed sales.

Thank you Laura – you set a great example."

Leaders Needed for Roanoke Valley Birding Competition, April 27

The Mill Mountain Discovery Center is having a birding competition for all ages on April 27, 2013. Christine Elder from Mill Mountain has asked for volunteer field trip leaders from the Bird Club to lead groups on bird walks to observe as many birds as possible. Leaders have a choice of any time between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. to lead a trip, any amount of time spent on the walk, and any location within a mapped area provided by Christine. Participants sign up in advance, with most being beginners. A tally will be held at 6 p.m. at the Discovery Center located just below the Star. Christine has also requested for volunteer judges to make sure that the birds observed are accurate. If you are interested, please contact Christine at 540-853-1236.

