



# January 2010 Newsletter

*Celebrating 53 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2010*

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Visit our website:  
[roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

## **DECEMBER MEETING**

Members's shared photos of their birding excursions.



## **NEXT MEETING: January 11, 7:00 p.m. Grandin Court Baptist Church**

Dr. Gene Sattler, who teaches at Liberty University and a well known birder throughout the state, will present a program on the banding of Saw-whet Owls. He conducts a banding program every year and this promises to be a most interesting presentation.

*Please join us for dinner at 5:30 p.m. before the meeting at the Brambleton Deli at 3655 Brambleton Road.*

## **Roanoke, Fincastle, and Peaks of Otter Christmas Bird Counts Rescheduled: Jan. 2, 3, and 5**

Due to heavy snow, the bird counts were rescheduled. So if you haven't signed up to participate *here's another chance!* For more information, contact:

**Jan.2–Roanoke Count:** Bill Hunley (774-2397 or [whunley@mbc.edu](mailto:whunley@mbc.edu))

**Jan. 3–Fincastle Count:** Eunice Hudgins (389-4056 or [uvaau@aol.com](mailto:uvaau@aol.com)) or Barry Kinzie (992-2743 or [peckerridge@ntelos.net](mailto:peckerridge@ntelos.net))

**Jan. 5–Peaks of Otter:** Barry Kinzie (992-2743 or [peckerridge@ntelos.net](mailto:peckerridge@ntelos.net))

## **February Raptor Count, Feb. 13**

Surprise your Valentine with a unique gift—a day of bird watching! Plan to spend a few hours driving away the winter blues on Saturday February 13, 2010. The annual Raptor Count is a great excuse to get out of the house and do some winter birding with your birding buddies. Even the New River Valley Bird Club has participated in the past. You should too. No skill is required, just a little time and effort.

Plan on a leisurely drive around your area, counting all the different hawks you see. Points are awarded for each hawk, although this is not a serious competition. The winner gets bragging rights! We compile the results from everyone's efforts and keep an eye on trends in hawk populations. This event is a good excuse to get out in the winter and do some birding.

In the unlikely event of inclement weather, an alternate date of Saturday February 20 has been set. Contact Anne Tucker (540) 721-1573 if you have any questions. The tally sheet can be emailed to [billt3256@att.net](mailto:billt3256@att.net) or mailed to 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121.

## ***RVBC 2010 Officers***

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At the November meeting the members voted for the following officers to serve in 2010:

President: Elly Wefel

VP (Programs): Bill Grant

VP (Membership): Eleanor Dye

Treasurer: Robin Austin

Secretary: Carol Whiteside

Directors at Large: Eunice Hudgins and Alyce Quinn

Bob Miller will serve as our field trips chairman, Maureen Eiger will handle publicity, and Carol Siler will continue to produce the newsletter.

Many thanks to Connie Marsh who served as our Secretary, Beth Griffin for serving as our field trips chairman, and Jane Ambrose-Cosby for organizing food and refreshments for club events.

## ***Thanks to Everyone Who Provided Refreshments***

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Many thanks to the following members who provided refreshments at our club meetings in 2009:

Jim Bush, Allen and Robin Austin, Pam and Elly Wefel, Alice Hylton, Mary Lou Agee, Happy Hawks, Linda Boast, Larry Hutson, Alyce Quinn, Nancy and Bob Luce, Linda Boast, and everyone who brought goodies for our December holiday meeting.

## ***Thanks for a Successful Seed Sale***

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Thanks to everyone who assisted with our club's seed sale setting up the site, loading seed and for making the day a pleasant event. Many non-members purchased seed this year. The seed sale profit totaled \$1200.63.

We especially thank Maureen Eiger, Bill Grant, and Zach Thompson. Maureen Eiger arranged a video spot on the local Cox Cable channel to promote the seed sale. Bill Grant and Zach Thompson appeared on camera to talk about the sale, the club, birdwatching, and bird feeding.

## ***Girl Scout Duck and Habitat Walk Thank You***

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I want to give a *Roanoke Valley Bird Club Thank You* to: John and Eunice Hudgins, Tim and Alyce Quinn, Jane Ambrose-Cosby, Pam Wefel, and Michael Belcher for helping with the Girl Scout Duck Walk at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield on Dec. 13.

John Hudgins gave the girls an overview of wild ducks and some pointers on identifying them in the field. Michael Belcher, while unable to attend, prepared a good handout for the girls to help them identify the ducks.

About 30 scouts, ages 5 to 12, participated along with a number of parents. The Girl Scout Skyline Council provided the girls with a program on how to use binoculars and spotting scopes. The walk was a very worthwhile effort on the Club's part in promoting birding to young people.

*Elly Wefel*



Scouts learn to use a scope at Greenfield Lake.

## ***FIELD TRIPS***

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**CHAIRMAN**

**BOB MILLER 797-0462**

**REMEMBER TO SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL**

### ***Botetourt Habitats, Jan. 23, 8 a.m.***

Bill Hunley will lead this trip to some birdy spots in the Botetourt area. Meet at the Bojangles in Botetourt Commons at 8:00 AM. Limited walking.

### ***Sightings***

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Oct. 25-Sidney and Mary Lou Barritt spotted and photographed an Eared Grebe at the Botetourt Center on Greenfield Lake.

Nov. 29-Carl Boast saw a Bald Eagle circling over Smith Mt. Lake.

Dec. 1-Alyce Quinn saw a male Purple Finch at a feeder at her home in Burnt Chimney.

Dec. 1-Katie James sighted a Red-breasted Nuthatch at her suet feeder in Roanoke.



Dec. 4-Barry Kinzie confirmed sightings of a Mute Swan on Greenfield Lake.

Dec. 15-Barry Kinzie saw Purple Finch (7), Fox Sparrows (2), Pine Siskin (1), Hermit Thrush (6), and American Robins (500+) at Woodpecker Ridge Nature Preserve.

## **Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 12-15**

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The Great Backyard Bird Count is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds.

1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count. You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day. You can also submit more than one checklist per day if you count in other locations on that day.

2. Count the greatest number of individuals of each species that you see together at any one time. You may find it helpful to print out a [regional bird checklist: http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist](http://gbbc.birdsource.org/gbbcApps/checklist) to get an idea of the kinds of birds you're likely to see in your area in February. You could take note of the highest number of each species you see on this checklist.

3. When you're finished, enter your results [through the GBBC Website: http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) You'll see a button marked "Enter Your Checklists!" on the website home page beginning on the first day of the count. It will remain active until the deadline for data submission on March 1st.

[Data form: http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/data-form/2010GBBC\\_DataForm.pdf](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/data-form/2010GBBC_DataForm.pdf) Some people find it helpful to fill out the form before entering it on the website. By printing it off ahead of time, they know what information they need to be aware of, such as snow depth, for example.

*For more info visit: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/whycount.html>*

## **Counting Chimney Swifts**

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*by Evelyn Andrejewski*



In early August, Chimney Swifts begin roosting in the chimneys at Franklin County High School in Rocky Mount. Liz Cole and I counted the swifts this year. We would arrive an hour before dusk. At first we would see only a few swifts in the area, and then one or two would begin dropping into the chimney; while others would fly around

chirping. As it approached dusk, a few more groups would join in, flying in circles around the chimneys. Before long several swifts seemed to float down into the chimney.

More swifts gathered in the air and just as it starts to get really dark and noisy with chirping, swifts start zooming into the chimney as if they're miniature jet fighters. The swifts will cling to the chimney walls to rest for the night. If you stay awhile you'll notice one swift who seems to be flying around waiting for stragglers. After the three or four latecomers have entered the chimney so will the guard.

Mark your calendar for next year's swift watch. The show starts in early August and continues through early October. Liz Cole and I counted over 2,000 swifts in late September. I'll meet you there if I can.

## **What's that Twittering in My Chimney?**

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Chimney Swifts historically nested and roosted in hollow trees. As American pioneers moved westward across the continent, they cleared forests and removed the swifts' natural habitat. The birds that Audubon called American Swifts became known as Chimney Swifts as they readily adapted to the masonry chimneys erected by those same pioneers. Today, just like Purple Martins, Chimney Swifts rely almost entirely on man-made structures for nest sites. Because they cannot perch like songbirds, Chimney Swifts must have deep shafts in which to raise their families and roost at night.

Chimney Swifts eat nearly one third of their own weight in flying insect pests such as mosquitoes, biting flies and termites every day. Like all Neotropical Migrants, Chimney Swifts are declining in numbers and need our assistance.

### ***What Can You Do To Help Chimney Swifts***

If you have a masonry or clay flue-tile chimney, keep the top open and the damper closed from March through October to provide a nest site for these insect-eaters. Metal chimneys should be permanently capped to prevent birds and other wildlife from being trapped.

Have your chimney cleaned in early March before the Chimney Swifts return from their winter home in South America.

Work with local conservation groups to construct Chimney Swift Towers and educate your friends and neighbors about Chimney Swifts.

Join the North American Chimney Swift Nest Site Research Project as a Research Associate. The research project promotes Chimney Swift conservation by identifying and monitoring existing nest and roost sites,

educating property owners about the beneficial nature of Chimney Swifts as insectivores, designing, installing and monitoring new structures specifically for use by Chimney Swifts as nest and roost sites.

### ***Home Chimney Maintenance: Selecting An Appropriate Chimney Sweep***

Every chimney needs to be professionally cleaned each year for the safety of the homeowner as well as for the safety of the Chimney Swifts. Although attitudes are changing within the chimney sweeping industry, there are still companies that will remove active nests and kill or discard the young. Before hiring a chimney sweep, ask what action they take when they find birds in a chimney. NEVER hire a company that openly advertises “Bird Removal.”

*For more information about swifts visit <http://www.chimneyswifts.org>*

## ***Book Review: A Natural History Guide to Great Smoky Mountains National Park***

By Donald W. Linzey  
244 pages ISBN-13:978-1-57233-612-4 \$24.95 (soft cover)

*Reviewed by Carole Massart*

*This book is of excellent educational value for scientists, officials, and especially the general public. He employs an informative and readable style of presentation throughout the book, which any reader will appreciate.*

The Great Smoky Mountain National Park is one of America’s most beautiful, accessible and popular national parks. It’s home to more than 100,000 species of plants and animals. The grandeur and sheer scale of the park have been well-captured in this volume. Written from the perspective of a naturalist who has spent over 50 years conducting research in the park, this book provides a thorough overview of everything a visitor would need to know, without complex jargon.

Dr. Donald Linzey, wildlife biologist, ecologist and professor of biology at Wytheville Community College, has succeeded admirably in developing an especially comprehensive and fascinating account of the natural history of the park. He initially served as a seasonal park ranger-naturalist and as a graduate student pursuing his Ph.D. research on mammals during the 1960s.

The park is a treasure-trove of biological diversity and this book is replete with more than 165 beautiful color photos, maps and charts. Each chapter begins with a quotation written by well-known and revered naturalists and conservationists as well as a “Do You Know” section with questions to pique your interest and focus on

the important concepts in the chapter. The text spans time from the geologic origins of the park and pre-park history to the present including what the future may hold. A chapter on the Natural History Research in the Park focuses on naturalists Arthur Stupka, Don Defoe and others. Dr. Linzey includes the use of modern technology to track and estimate the current populations of flora and fauna. Of particular interest is the report of the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) undertaken in 1998 through December of 2007 in which 861 species new to science and 5,203 species new to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park have been found. Comprehensive lists of flora and fauna are described in the text and appendices.

This book is a great read as well as an excellent resource to tuck in your backpack for your next trip to the Great Smoky Mountain National Park!

## ***Winter Bird Feeding Tips***

Here are a few tips to get more value from your feeding:



Don’t fill your tube feeders with mixed seed. Mixed seed will run out onto the ground. Use sunflower seed instead.

Don’t scatter feed on the ground in the same place all winter. Change feeding spots several times to avoid creating unhealthy feeding areas, especially during wet weather.

Keep your feeders clean! Dirty feeders can make birds sick. Wash your feeders at least monthly in a light (9:1) water-to-bleach solution. Rinse thoroughly and allow to air dry.

Buy good seed. Avoid wheat, milo and barley. Instead, choose sunflower, millet, and cracked corn as main ingredients.

Inspect seed for moths and weevils. If your seed has cobwebs, it’s been invaded by moths. Throw it out and get new seed.

Provide feeder variety. Ground feeding is good, but many birds prefer to use hanging/raised feeders. If you’re feeding on the ground and are wondering where the chickadees, nuthatches, and woodpeckers are, use hanging feeders (hopper, tube or satellite feeders). You’ll soon get other visiting songbirds.

Offer apples, oranges, meat scraps, rendered suet, and/or mealworms.

If you like to feed birds all year long then do so. It is not true that your feeders keep birds from migrating. Birds that migrate know when to leave. Your feeders will not delay a migrant.

*summarized from Bird Watcher’s Digest*

# WINTER RAPTOR COUNT

February 13, 2010

Participants \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time started \_\_\_\_\_ Time completed \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>POINTS</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
TURKEY VULTURE	1*			
BLACK VULTURE	2*			
RED-TAILED HAWK	5			
AMERICAN KESTREL	10			
SCREECH OWL	10**			
RAVEN	10			
COOPER'S HAWK	20			
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	20			
LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE	50			
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	30			
GREAT HORNED OWL	30			
BARRED OWL	35			
BARN OWL	50			
NORTHERN HARRIER	40			
SHORT-EARED OWL	75			
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK	75			
GOLDEN EAGLE	100			
BALD EAGLE	50			
PEREGRINE FALCON	75			
MERLIN	75			
GOSHAWK	100			
LONG-EARED OWL	125			
SAW-WHET OWL	125			
NORTHERN SHRIKE	150			
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR	5			

POINT TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

\* Maximum 350 Points

\*\*Maximum 1100 Points}

However, keep your totals. There is a 10 point bonus on peak counts for these three species.

RULES: Teams may bird any area within 100 mile radius of Woodpecker Ridge. Birds must be seen or heard by at least 50%(minimum of 2) of team members. Count period not to exceed twelve hours.

