

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Next Meeting:
March 10, 7:00 pm
Grandin Court Baptist
Church

Celebrating
57 Years of Birding
1957-2014



www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

RVBC NEWSLETTER

March 2014



WHITE-WINGED SCOTER

Blue Ridge Birder, Harrol Blevins of Independence, Virginia took this photo at Field's Dam in Mouth of Wilson, Virginia on Tuesday morning, February 11, after receiving notification from Aaron Floyd of this rare bird's location.

Cover Story on page 3

**MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT
KENT DAVIS**



Dear VA-Birders,

This is a call for participation in the 2014 VSO Foray, the annual breeding bird survey of the Virginia Society of Ornithology. The foray will take place between June 7-15 in Middlesex and King & Queen Counties. These counties border the beautiful Dragon Run, well-known as an "ecological gem". While we won't be able to kayak the run itself, as the water level will be too low by June, the area around it will be good for birding. If anyone is interested in birding by boat, the foray area is bounded by the Rappahannock and Mattaponi Rivers.

These two counties are not heavily populated, so there's an abundance of woods and farmland. In addition, the Nature Conservancy has recently protected a large tract of forest. Along with the lands already protected by Friends of Dragon Run or the state, there are now over twenty thousand acres that are protected in the watershed. The foray area is easily accessible as a day trip from many of Virginia's metropolitan areas, so it's possible to participate without a large commitment of time if need be. We will get together once or twice during the foray for a "tally" of how the foray is going if there's enough interest. If you think you might like to participate, please email Susan Brown at susanbb@umich.edu. If you want to participate but would prefer to do it together with another birder or two, let me know.

Thanks and good birding,

kedjr@cox.net
540-344-8377

Next Meeting:

MONDAY, MARCH 10, 7:00 PM

Grandin Court Baptist Church

Featured Program:

"How life history traits contribute to lifetime fitness and affect responses to environmental change in Red-cockaded Woodpeckers"

This talk will focus on how individual behaviors, traits, and conditions at birth affect lifetime fitness in red-cockaded woodpeckers, and how traits have shifted over the last 30 years at two sites in North Carolina. **Vicki Garcia** is a PhD student in the Department of Biological Sciences at Virginia Tech. She received a Master's Degree in Wildlife Science from the University of Arizona, where her research focused on how food and ectoparasites influence natal dispersal in burrowing owls. Her current research examines red-cockaded woodpecker life history strategies.

With many thanks, the meeting refreshments will be provided by **John and Judy Loope**

**Please join us for dinner before the meeting
Brambleton Deli, 3655 Brambleton Road, 5:30 pm**

The previous program during the February Meeting featured "Climate Change and Its Likely Effects on Virginia's Flora and Fauna" by Chris Burkett, VDGIF.

**The Roanoke Valley
Bird Club**

Roanoke, Virginia



**2014
Executive Board**

Officers

President

Kent Davis 344-8377

First Vice President, programs

Butch Kelly 384-7429

Second Vice President, memberships

Eleanor Dye 890-1627

Secretary

Candy Andrzejewski 365-2508

Treasurer

Robin Austin 929-5222

Directors-at-Large

Eunice Hudgins 389-4056

Alyce Quinn 719-0109

Committee Chairmen

Bluebird Trails

Alyce Quinn 719-0109

Field Trips

Linda Cory 580-5214

Newsletter

Carol Whiteside 774-2143

Publicity

Maureen Eiger 342-4890

Youth Education

Laura Beltran 706-220-0980

Website:

Carol Siler 725-1609

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

CONTACT US!

The RVBC Newsletter is published monthly from September through May with the deadline for each issue on the **20th of the month** prior to publication. Photos and articles are gladly accepted for publication as room allows and may be sent electronically, but if original photos are mailed please include a SASE for photo return.

Thank you!

Carol Whiteside

6487 Shingle Ridge Road • Roanoke, VA 24018
whitesidemules@yahoo.com 540.774.2143



Sightings

● **2/1/14 Kent Davis, Mike Smith, Eunice Hudgins and Liz Williams** birded Craig County, VA sighting 37 species which included: 1 Lesser Scaup, 2 Bald Eagle, and 3 Red-shouldered Hawk.

● **2/1/14 Wes Teets and Mike Purdy** birded Greenfield sighting Canvasbacks, Redheads, Greater Scaups, and Northern Pintails. **Bill and Katie James** joined them to Carvins Cove where they found Red-necked Grebe and one each of Horned and Pied-Billed Grebes.

● **2/16/14 Rupert Cutler** birded Lick Run Greenway at Andrews Road in NW Roanoke sighting a Cooper's hawk perched in a tree from 15 feet away; Raven croaking while flying overhead, Golden-crowned kinglet, and White-breasted nuthatch.

● **2/16/14 Barry Kinzie** reports from Apalachicola, Florida that he saw a Buff-bellied Hummer, a Calliope Hummer and two Painted Buntings. He also noted that there have been more exciting winter bird events in the Roanoke Valley since January 1, adding that the ducks at Greenfield Lake have been the best and most numerous ever!

February 10 Membership Meeting Reported Sightings

Sightings included two pileated woodpeckers seen on a suet feeder, a golden-crowned kinglet, a flock of forty-nine turkeys, three bluebirds on suet at one time, and a thrush hovering at a feeder to knock suet to the ground.



Field Trips

2/8/14 9:00am-11:00am – **Carol Whiteside** hosted a feeder watch field trip for Ed Kinser's class, Birds of the Blue Ridges, with 14 in attendance sighting 18 species that included: Golden-crowned Kinglet and Hairy Woodpecker.

2/12/14 8:30-11:00am – **Laura Beltran** led a field trip to Greenfield Lake in Botetourt County with 9 in attendance sighting 45 species that included: 4 American Wigeon, 2 Northern Pintail, 6 Green-winged Teal (American), 30 Canvasback (Great looks at the unique head shape and long black bill. It was nice to see them with nearby Red Head ducks for size comparison. Second highest count in the Roanoke Valley. Our record is 50 in Jan of 1966.) 6 Greater Scaup, 1 Red-breasted Merganser, 1 Red-shouldered Hawk, 2 Wilson's Snipe, and 1 Hermit Thrust.

2/23/14 8:30-9:45 am – **Linda Cory** led a field trip to Roanoke Sewage Ponds with 19 in attendance sighting 24 species that included: 4 American Wigeon, 2 Green-winged Teal, 5 Wilson's Snipe, 2 American Kestrel, 13 Tree Swallow, and 2 Red-winged Blackbird. Also, the group visited **Roanoke River Trail at Explore Park, 10:00-11:30 am** sighting 11 species that included: 2 Pied-billed Grebe, 1 Brown Creeper, and 8 Golden-crowned Kinglet.

Kent's Bird of the Month

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER

Melanitta fusca

From Barry Kinzie's *Birds and Birding the Roanoke Valley*

Status: Very rare spring and fall transient and winter visitor. There are about 10 records here for this species. (October 20 – April 20)

Extreme Dates: October 21, 1987, Roanoke STP, fide M. Donahue – April 11, 1971, Carvins Cove, B. Opengari, also recording the peak count (15).



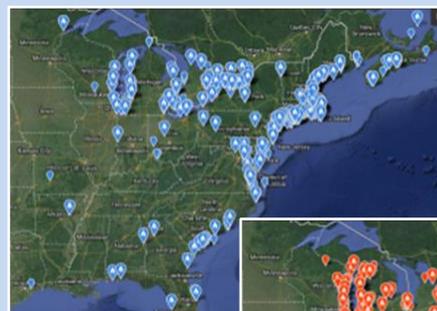
A large black duck of coastal waters, the White-winged Scoter breeds farther inland than the other two scoter species and is the one most likely to appear inland on lakes and rivers during migration. It is mostly black except for white eye patch and white wing patch. Bill is orange with large black basal knob. The female is dark brown with a dark gray bill and small basal knob and white patches in front of and behind the eyes.

White-winged Scoters breed in Alaska and much of northern and central Canada. Spends winters along the coasts, from Alaska south to California and from Newfoundland south to the Carolinas, but rarely to Florida and Texas. Breeds on large lakes and winters mainly on the ocean and on large coastal bays.

White-winged Scoter: Feeds on mollusks, crustaceans, aquatic insects, and small fish found in marine and freshwater habitats. Usually forages by diving under water.

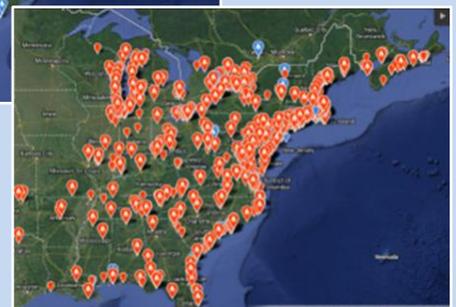
The eBird charts below show the difference between the sightings of White-winged Scoters from Jan. 2013 and Jan. 2014. It is believed that the higher than normal ice cover on the Great Lakes is a contributing factor in the higher sighting this year.

From eBird



2013 ▲

2014 ►



Birds of the Blue Ridges

Emily Painter



If you think “Old-Sam-Peabody-Peabody-Peabody-Peabody” or “Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?” sound like the bluegrass band you heard last Friday night, then you might consider signing up for **Ed Kinser’s** next Birds of the Blue Ridges course. Amongst common songs and calls, like the White-throated sparrow or the Barred owl (respectively), you’ll be treated to an education on bird anatomy, physiology, and history, as well as birding tools like identifying features and habitats, and the best field guides and websites. The class is part classroom/part field trip with sites around Bent Mountain,

Poor Mountain, and Bottom Creek. Members of the **Roanoke Valley Bird Club**, including **Ed** and his wife, **Joanie**, generously allowed recent participants to visit their properties for Saturday field trips. Ed’s generosity of spirit and knowledge make this what one student calls, “The best bird class ever.”



Prior to the start of the most recent course, Ed wrote a brief introduction for the 18 students, “When I was growing up on a farm in Tazewell, Virginia, I always wanted to know the names of things, and still haven’t gotten over it. My elementary teacher had some ‘bird cards’ saved from Arm and Hammer Baking Soda boxes and I got excited about birds by studying those cards. Finally, in graduate school, I took Ornithology at University of Virginia’s Mountain Lake Biological Station. That was in 1971, and I’ve been serious about birds ever since.”



Ed’s passion is contagious as evidenced by a big jump in sign-ups for the course that recently ended. The next course will be his third offering at The Bent Mountain Center and you can expect there to be repeat students and a waiting list. Teaching plans change with seasons, birding habitat and migration, so **Carol Whiteside** and I plan on being permanent enrollees, at least as long as Ed is teaching! We hope you’ll join us.



Carol Whiteside photos top to bottom:
1st and 2nd Ed explains the egg hatching process
3rd **Allen Austin** (right) hosts a field trip
4th The group

Meet a Member

LINDA CORY

RVBC LIFETIME MEMBER

How long have you been in the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and how did you find it? Good question! I first attended meetings and going on field trips in the early 1970's. I remember getting great birding help from **Eunice and John Hudgins**, Tom Johnson, Perry Kendig and many others. After traveling for a few years, I rejoined in 1980. I have tried just about everything in the club including president and was on the VSO Board of Directors for a three year stint. Being the current Field Trip Chair is challenging but rewarding, and I'd recommend it to anyone interested.

My first recollection of birds was camping which we did often as a family in California. My first WOW bird was a mountain bluebird that my mother pointed out to me. Dad had a pair of binoculars that weighed a ton, but I dragged them around with me. Birding is something you can do wherever you go; I've enjoyed birding in South and Central America, Europe and all over the U.S. including over a dozen trips to Hawaii. Australia and New Zealand are on my bucket list.

My family is from California and General Electric brought us to Salem when I was ten. Most of the family has gone back, but I'm attached to the Blue Ridge Mountains. I've retired once (from banking), but continue to work. I work in Allstate's call center full time and do notary work on the side. Hubby Tom has a recording studio (31 years now) and plays gigs on the side. We are always busy! As for hobbies I enjoy Scrabble (Scrabble anyone?) and playing my ukulele (it's that Hawaii thing!)



Linda and Tim Quinn performing at
The RVBC Bluebird Trails Luau



Birding in the Peru rain forest

Bird Melanism by Melissa Mayntz

When birders head into the field and see a certain species, they expect that bird to have certain plumage colors, but conditions such as bird melanism can drastically change a bird's appearance.

What Is Melanism

Melanism, or melanosis, is a condition caused by a genetic mutation that gives a bird excess amounts of melanin in its feathers. This makes the feathers much darker than normal plumage, and many melanistic birds appear completely brown or black. There are two ways melanism can affect birds' plumage:

- Normally dark markings are bolder and noticeably "overrun" their typical boundaries
- All the plumage is darkened and appears dark brown or black

Just like with leucism, melanism can vary for different birds and some individuals will show much darker plumage than normal, while other birds will have less noticeable changes in their coloration, particularly if they already have dark markings.

Dark Morphs and Melanism

While a true melanistic bird is rare, many bird species have regular color morphs that show some degree of melanism. This creates a dark morph variation of the bird's typical plumage, and birders can learn to recognize the most common of these birds without difficulty. Two species with the most well known dark morphs are red-tailed hawks and ferruginous hawks.

How to Identify Melanistic Birds

When a bird's typical plumage can no longer be seen, identification can be more challenging. When looking at a melanistic bird, it is impossible



Melanistic Mallard Hen
© Howard Chena

to rely on color alone to determine the species, since much of the color will be overshadowed by the darker plumage. Instead, birders should pay particular attention to the bird's size and shape, behavior, feeding, range and song. If the bird is found in a flock, its associates can be strong clues about the species, even in mixed flocks. Carefully examining the bird's legs, feet, eyes and bill is also useful, as these physical features are not affected by melanism.

Effects of Melanism on Birds

Whereas leucism can be dangerous for birds because it robs them of camouflage, melanism can actually be beneficial by helping conceal birds more fully. Melanistic birds in cold weather climates can also absorb solar radiation more efficiently, helping them regulate their body heat without expending as much energy. Studies of other melanistic animals, particularly felines, have indicated genetic links between melanism and stronger immune systems, which may give melanistic animals and birds better resistance to diseases. It is believed that these positive benefits may have helped give rise to the common dark color morphs of different bird species.

Of course, a bird with melanism may still have difficulty attracting a mate because their coloration is not the expected breeding plumage. Too much melanin in feathers may also rob the birds of some feather flexibility, which could lead to brittle feathers that are subject to damage more easily.

Any abnormally colored bird can be a treat for birders to see. By understanding what bird melanism is and how it affects plumage, birders can easily identify melanistic birds and appreciate their uniqueness.



Calendar of Events

Linda Cory, Field Trip Chairman, 580-5214

*Please do not call any of the trip leaders after 8pm the night before the field trip,
in consideration of having to get up early the next day to lead the field trip.
Please remember to share the cost of gas when you carpool.
Thank you!*



MARCH

- 8 **Evening Woodcock Walk with Linda Cory (580-5214) 5:30 pm.** Meet 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.
- 10 **RVBC MEETING, 7:00 pm. "How life history traits contribute to lifetime fitness and affect responses to environmental change in Red-cockaded Woodpeckers"** presented by Vicki Garcia, a PhD student in the Department of Biological Sciences at Virginia Tech.
- 12 **Second Wednesday Midweek Walk - Greenfield Lake, 8:30 am.** Please join naturalist **Laura Beltran (706-220-0980)** for a walk around Greenfield Lake in Botetourt County. We will search for waterfowl and songbirds. Mostly flat walking for about 1 1/2 miles. Meet at the second dirt parking lot (off of International Parkway) on the right across the road from the lake.
- 15 **Locher Tract with Bill Hunley (774-2397) and Mike Donahue (312-1604) 8:00 am.** Join long time Field Trip Leaders Bill Hunley and Mike Donahue for a field trip to Locher Tract. Located in the Jefferson National Forest, the Locher Tract is a managed wildlife habitat that contains woods, open fields, a beaver pond and good views of the James River. We expect a good variety of birds, including early migrants such as Pine Warbler, Wood Duck and Fox Sparrow. Locher Tract is near Natural Bridge Station in Rockbridge County. There will be about one mile of level walking. Meet at 8AM at Botetourt Commons in front of the Bojangles.
- 18 **Young Birders Club 7:00 pm.** This first meeting will be at the Raleigh Court Library meeting room.
- 29 **Bent Mountain Birding, 9:00 am.** Meet **Ed Kinser (330-7023)** at the Bent Mountain Community Center for birding the Bent Mountain hot spots. Wear sturdy shoes for some level walking. The community center is also known as the former Bent Mountain Elementary School at 10148 Tinsley Lane.

Rusty Blackbird Blitz – March 2014

If a Rust Blackbird is spotted, please contact Kent Davis at kedjr@cox.net or 344-8377

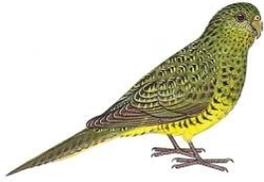
The Virginia Society of Ornithology has agreed to coordinate Virginia's participation in the Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz. This project will transcend state and country boundaries to survey Rusty Blackbirds throughout their entire international range. Spanning 37 states and all of Canada, this massive effort will explore the timing, hotspots, and behaviors of Rusty Blackbird northward migration. Migratory patterns and requirements remain one of the biggest mysteries of Rusty biology, and this Blitz will be critical for defining research directions, identifying hotspots, targeting conservation actions, and raising the profile of the Rusty Blackbird among birders and conservationists alike. For those who may have participated in the recent Winter Blitz, one key difference of the Spring Blitz is that due to the length and potential variability of spring migration, the target Blitz dates will be longer and more open-ended. The window for the entire Blitz will be from the beginning of March through mid-June with each state receiving a target time frame within that window. The current target window for **Virginia is proposed to be all of March**, based on an evaluation of historical eBird data. A Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz> has been created to serve as a major, up-to-the-minute coordination central for this event—announcing sightings in real time, posting fun pictures to raise excitement and help with IDs, networking within a broad birding community, and giving birders a heads-up on Rusty movement.



Who Gives the Hoot!

WORLD'S MOST MYSTERIOUS BIRD by Laura Beltran

What is the most mysterious bird in the world? Here are your clues: it is yellowish green mottled with brown and black and about 9 inches long. It inhabits the southern part of Australia and it is nocturnal. It was discovered in 1845, and after a few sightings of the bird in the 1870's, no reliable sightings were reported until a road killed specimen was found in 1990. Another dead bird was found in 2006 in Queensland. If you guessed **Night Parrot**, you are correct. In 2013, a naturalist named John Young discovered 2 pairs of night parrots and 3 nestlings in an undisclosed location in Queensland. He provided video and photographic evidence to experts confirming these sightings. Since his sightings, he has worked with researchers so data may be collected on the life cycle of these birds, since very little is known about these secretive animals. Also, the exact location of his discovery is remaining a secret to protect both the birds and their habitat. If you would like to learn more, go to: <http://theconversation.com/found-worlds-most-mysterious-bird-but-why-all-the-secrecy-18000>



Welcome New Members!



Karl Huebner, Forest
Tanya Hylton, Copper Hill
Paul Klockenbrink, Roanoke
Suzanne Ross, Roanoke

HELP SAVE A WILD BIRD! by Maureen Eiger

It is March and almost baby bird season. There is a need for more Wild Bird Rehab supplies this year. If you are willing to donate any of the following items they will be very much appreciated. All items are used for rehabbing injured or orphaned wild birds. If you need a tax deductible receipt see me and one will be provided. Hope you can help!

Paper towels & tissues (baby birds poop!) old but clean towels, 1" deep sturdy rectangular containers for mini bird baths.

Suet cakes, small bags of seed, Dove mix (found only at Petco)

Any amount of money on a Gift-card/cash- for Pet Emporium, Petco (for fish and crickets) Roanoke Food Co-op, Kroger, Food Lion, Fresh Market (for fresh fruit and grains.) Fresh fruit is very expensive. A Cedar Waxwings diet is 90% fruit.

Grocery store items; powdered egg whites, white sugar, peanut butter, jam or pure fruit jelly (any berry or grape) Gerber chicken and gravy (only) baby food.

Cleaning supplies; bleach, sponges and tall kitchen bags (use 1 bag a day) unused spray bottles.

For the outdoor bird cages; tree bark (large strips) wooden dowels, fiberglass screen, shade cloth, logs, bags of landscape pebbles, 1/4" hardware cloth. Also I could use some help with repairs to some of the cages. Please let me know if you are handy with a saw and a drill and can spare a couple of hours.

Earth worms, sow bugs, small bugs – good project for the kids! Mealworms, wax worms and crickets are always needed. If you are trimming Oaks or Maples I could always use some fresh branches, please call me.

Do you have a fruit tree or berries on your property and would like to share some fruit for the rehab birds? Please let me know. Also if you find/have Gypsy Moth cocoons call me at (540) 342-4890. Birds love them. Thanks for your help! Maureen Eiger, Category IIA State and Federally Permitted Bird Rehabilitator.



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 to go out 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 (anytime 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 10. Please either plan to attend the March meeting to sign up or call **Alyce at 719-0109** or email her at twoquinn@yahoo.com by March 10. And please be prepared to let Alyce know if there are days you are unavailable to monitor.



Carol Whiteside photo



The Roanoke Valley Bird Club
 c/o Eleanor Dye
 P.O. Box 74
 Vinton, Virginia 24179



Spring arrives March 20!



The Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Roanoke, Virginia

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

All memberships expire on August 31

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

How did you hear about the club? _____

- Student \$ 7 _____
- Individual \$12 _____
- Family \$20 _____
- Adopt-a-Bluebird \$15 _____
- Sustaining \$30 _____
- Additional Contribution \$ _____
- Total Submitted \$ _____**

Mail with check payable to RVBC
 to:
 Eleanor Dye
 P.O. Box 74
 Vinton, VA 24179

Inside This Issue

Page	
1	White-winged scoter
2	Identification and Information
3	Sightings and Field Trips
3	Bird Mo, White-winged scoter
4	Birds of the Blue Ridges
5	Meet Member Linda Cory
5	Bird Melanism
6	Calendar of Evens
6	Rusty Blackbird Blitz
7	Who Gives the Hoot!
7	Welcome New Members
8	Membership

Next Issue April

Deadline:

March 20.