



# February 2011

## Newsletter

**Celebrating 54 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2011**

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### JANUARY MEETING

Due to the weather the January meeting was cancelled.

### VSO Annual Meeting, Harrisonburg, May 13-15

The annual meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology will be held May 13-15 in Harrisonburg. Hosted by the Rockingham Bird Club and headquartered at the Holiday Inn, the meeting will feature a banquet, field trips, exhibits, vendors, a technical paper session, and the VSO's annual business meeting. The banquet speaker will be Dan Kristol, professor of Biology at the College of William and Mary. Rockingham County lies astride the Shenandoah Valley extending from Shenandoah Mountain in the west to the Blue Ridge in the east. Both mountain ranges are flyways for spring migrants as well as breeding grounds for numerous species. The lowlands in the valley provide good habitat for grassland birds and the numerous stock ponds attract a variety of shorebirds.

The Holiday Inn at 1400 East Market Street will be the meeting headquarters (540 433-2523; [www.holidayinn.com](http://www.holidayinn.com)). A block of rooms has been reserved at a special rate of \$84, plus tax. Reservations must be made by May 1, using the code "RBC", to obtain the special rate. Other lodging options include the Jameson Inn (540 442-1515) and the Sleep Inn (540 433-7100). All meals, other than the banquet, are on your own. To register, download the form from the Rockingham Bird Club website, [www.rockinghambirdclub.com](http://www.rockinghambirdclub.com). The registration deadline is May 1, 2011. Upon arrival registration packets can be picked up at the VSO table located in the Tropical Court at the motel. Participants may also sign up for field trips at that time. Direct questions to Elizabeth Ihle, 540-234-8296 or [eliza51@aol.com](mailto:eliza51@aol.com).

### VSO Piney Grove Field Trip, May 28

The VSO and CCB (Center for Conservation Biology) will join together for a field trip to The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve, site of nesting red-cockaded woodpeckers. The past few years have produced good looks at red-cockaded woodpecker nest sites and good views of adult birds. Participants will assemble at 5:20 a.m. on May 28 at the Virginia Diner in Wakefield and carpool to Piney Grove. The group is limited to 15 people, so you MUST be a VSO member and pre-register. REGISTER EARLY. Contact Meredith Bell to register: 804-824-4958 or [merandlee@cox.net](mailto:merandlee@cox.net) or 8270 Little England, Hayes, VA 23072

### NEXT MEETING:

**February 14, 7:00 p.m.  
Grandin Court Baptist  
Church**

We'll watch a video by Don and Lillian Stokes titled *Attracting Birds - Birdfeeders, Birdhouses and Birdbaths*. Lots of good info for novice and experienced birders alike.

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

# FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN

BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

## Feb 19th, 9:00 AM, Backyard Birding

Join Carol Whiteside (774-2143) at her home in SW Roanoke Co. for a morning of backyard birding. Carol has 12 bird feeders plus lots of birdy habitat on her 9 acres which includes woodlands, pastures, a stream and a pond. Expect to see a variety of birds including bluebirds, towhees, a variety of woodpeckers, fox sparrows and ruby crowned kinglets. We may even be treated to turkeys. Light refreshments will be provided. Meet at 8:45 AM at the lower level of Towers Mall (bank side) to carpool. Beth Griffin (265-4853) will lead the way.

## Feb. 26th, 9:00 AM, Duck Walk

Leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn (719-0109) will direct us to local ponds in search of waterfowl. Limited walking. Bring a scope if you have one. Meet near the Bojangles at Botetourt Commons at 9:00 AM.

## Look For Rusty Blackbirds, Jan. 29–Feb. 13



The Rusty Blackbird Blitz takes place January 29th to February 13th. Get out and find some.

To learn more: [http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty\\_blackbird/protocol.cfm](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/research/rusty_blackbird/protocol.cfm)

## Annual Raptor Count, Feb. 5



Plan to spend a few hours driving away the winter blues on Saturday, February 5. The annual Raptor Count is a great excuse to get out of the house and do some winter birding with your birding buddies.

In the unlikely event of inclement weather, an alternate date of Saturday, February 19 has been set. Contact Anne Tucker (540) 721-1573 if you have any questions. The completed tally sheet (Sheet included in January RVBC Newsletter. Also available as a download from [roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com)) can be emailed to [billt3256@gmail.com](mailto:billt3256@gmail.com) or mailed to Anne Tucker, 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121.

If you need help with raptor ID download the

North East Hawkwatch Raptor ID Guide: [http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/NEHW\\_Hawk\\_Guide\\_08.pdf](http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com/NEHW_Hawk_Guide_08.pdf)

## Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 18–21

See January RVBC newsletter for details or visit: For more information about the count, visit: <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

# FIELD NOTES

## January 22, 9:00 AM, Booker T. Washington National Monument

Ten birders joined leader Bill Hunley for a chilly morning walk. Highlights were brown creeper, yellow-bellied sapsucker, all three nuthatches (although they didn't see, only heard, the brown-headed), Cooper's hawk, and a red-shouldered hawk that flew 15 feet overhead. They later saw it (or another one) flying back over clutching something unidentifiable in its talons.

## 26 Species of Rather Uncommon or Fairly Rare Birds Found in the Roanoke Valley in 2010

Cackling Goose	Short-eared Owl
Trumpeter Swan	Red-headed Woodpecker
Northern Bobwhite	Olive-sided Flycatcher
Red-throated Loon	Least Flycatcher
American Bittern	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Marsh Wren
Rough-legged Hawk	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Golden Eagle	American Tree Sparrow
Peregrine Falcon	Summer Tanager
Sora	Dickcissel
Semipalmated Plover	Rusty Blackbird
Sanderling	Red Crossbill
Black-billed Cuckoo	
Barn Owl	

*compiled by Barry Kinzie  
January 7, 2011*

# Sightings

Dec. 18: Jill Overstreet, who lives in Garden City, sighted an adult bald eagle in a tree along the creek on Garden City Blvd. Recently on her property, Jill sighted a hermit thrush, a red-breasted nuthatch, and a pair of hairy woodpeckers. Regular visitor highlights include fox sparrows, pine siskins, and brown-headed nuthatches.

Carol Whiteside sighted pine siskins and a ruby-crowned kinglet on her property this winter. On Jan. 11 a flock of

American robins descended on her snow-covered pastures.



Carol Whiteside ©

## Volunteers Needed for Avian Monitoring: Warm Springs Mountain Preserve (Bath County, VA near Hot Springs)

*Mid-April to mid-June: Carpooling from Charlottesville available.*

The Nature Conservancy is studying breeding birds in the western mountains of Virginia and are looking for volunteers who have ornithology experience and bird identification through sound. They will be monitoring for breeding birds at our Warm Springs Mountain Preserve (Bath County). Carpooling may be available from Charlottesville.

You must be available for overnight trips (staying at a remote, primitive cabin on the preserve free of cost) and/or very early morning starts at dawn. They plan to be in the field starting to monitor at 6 a.m., which may mean leaving Charlottesville the night before or at 3:30 a.m. You must be physically fit and able to traverse steep, rocky mountainous terrain in remote locations in various weather conditions.

Volunteers will be working in teams of three with staff. Support volunteers are also needed where ornithology skills may not be required. Support volunteers will be needed for writing down data, timing and finding points with GPS units.

If interested please contact Jen Rich, volunteer coordinator at [jrich@tnc.org](mailto:jrich@tnc.org) or 434-951-0572 with a resumé or list of birding experience. Interviews will likely be conducted.

## Virginia Master Naturalists: Roanoke Chapter Accepting Applications

The Roanoke Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists is accepting applications for the 2011 Course scheduled to begin Tuesday, February 15. Classes will be on Tuesday evenings from 6:00–9:15 with some Saturday field trips. Cost of the course is \$100.00. Visit <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/chapters.html>

Contact Dennis McCarthy with the Virginia Division of Forestry at 540-387-5461 for more information. Class size is limited to 27 participants. Applications must be received before February 4th.

## Wildlife Rehabilitation Classes: Get involved in Helping Virginia's Wildlife

The Wildlife Center of Virginia presents: *Wildlife Capture, Restraint, Handling & Transportation*

Whether you are interested in becoming a permitted rehabilitator, or you simply want to safely assist any injured wildlife that you encounter, this class is essential. Learn effective capture, restraint, and handling techniques used at the Wildlife Center of Virginia. View slides introducing some of the most commonly seen species in wildlife rehabilitation. Demonstrations using stuffed animals and commercial safety equipment will be shown and videos of capture techniques will also be presented. Discussions will include the importance of learning and developing skills to properly ensure the safety of both you and the animal.

*Introduction to Raising Orphaned Birds:* This basic beginner's course on raising orphaned birds focuses on the rehabilitation of "beginner" species and basics on "intermediate" species of orphaned birds commonly seen in Virginia, including: American robin, European starling, common grackle, mourning dove, blue jay, northern mockingbird, northern cardinal, American goldfinch, house finch, purple finch, house sparrow and eastern bluebird. Natural history, identification, general care, proper nutrition, diet and feeding, housing, release criteria and problems and solutions are all covered. Class is designed for the new rehabilitator.

**Date:** Saturday, March 5th, 10:00 am–noon: *Wildlife Capture, Restraint, Handling, and Transportation*

**1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.: Introduction to Raising Orphaned Birds**

**Location:** Norwich Center, Roanoke Parks and Recreation

**Fee:** \$20 for *Capture & Restraint*; \$25 for *Intro to Birds*

**Registration:** Roanoke City Parks and Rec: 540-853-2236

## Slow Birding



Black-vented oriole

Chris Hitt ©

In 2010, birder Chris Hitt from North Carolina completed a big year in the lower 48 states sighting 704 species for the year. He kept a blog, *Slow Birding*. To see photos and read about his sightings, visit: <http://slowbirding.blogspot.com/>

## A Whimbrel Called Hope

A Whimbrel named Hope was captured and fitted with a satellite radio-transmitter by biologists from the Center for Conservation Biology, of the College of William and Mary, on 19 May, 2009 while making a migratory stop-over on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. She left Virginia

on May 26 and flew to the western shore of James Bay, a southern part of Hudson Bay in Canada. She staged on James Bay for 3 weeks before flying to the Mackenzie River Delta in the Northwest Territories of Canada near Alaska and then on to the Beaufort Sea of the Arctic Ocean, where she staged for more than 2 weeks before flying again to Hudson Bay. Hope staged on South Hampton Island, in upper Hudson Bay, for 3 weeks before leaving on a non-stop southern flight of more than 3,500 miles (!!!) over the open Atlantic to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean Sea where she spent the winter months. In less than one year, Hope traveled more than 18,000 miles!

Hope wintered on St. Croix for 8 months from 14 August 2009, where she was observed foraging on Great Pond, a Birdlife International Important Bird Area, until leaving on the evening of 9 April 2010. She then flew northwest toward the U.S. East Coast over the Atlantic Ocean for nearly 1,500 miles. The bird then followed the shoreline around the Outer Banks of North Carolina and up to the lower Delmarva Peninsula making landfall in the afternoon of 11 April 2010. The entire Atlantic trip covered about 1,660 miles in less than 2 days. Hope settled on the same Virginia marsh where she was captured by CCB biologists in the spring of 2009.

Hope left her Virginia staging area on May 22, 2010 and flew the 12-day, 3149 mile journey to the Canada's Mackenzie River Delta arriving on 4 June 2010, having stopped briefly along the Hudson Bay. Hope once again spent the summer in the Mackenzie Delta. She likely incubated eggs while there, and then flew to Hudson Bay, where she staged last year for the big flight down to wintering grounds in the Caribbean.

Her amazing two year odyssey recorded by CCB researchers only confirms how much of the species' life cycle is dependent on specific staging sites and that their migrations are surprisingly structured.

For more info: <http://www.fws.gov/sssp/whimbrels.html>

November 17, 2010

Credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

## XERXES Society Announces the Publication of Attracting Native Pollinators

*Attracting Native Pollinators: Protecting North America's Bees and Butterflies*, will be published in February by Storey Publishing, North Adams, Massachusetts.

*Attracting Native Pollinators* provides the latest understanding about creating and managing pollinator habitat. Illustrated with hundreds of color photographs and dozens of specially created illustrations, the book is divided into four sections:

- *Pollinators and Pollination* explains the value of pollinators, and includes informative chapters on the natural history and habitat needs of bees, butterflies, flies, beetles, and wasps.
- *Taking Action* provides comprehensive information on ways to help pollinators and on creating nest sites and safe foraging areas. It includes guidance on conserving pollinators in all kinds of landscapes: gardens, natural areas, farms, recreation land, even eco-roofs.
- *Bees of North America* provides help with identifying the more abundant and important bee species, and supplies detailed profiles of more than thirty commonly encountered genera.
- *Creating a Pollinator-Friendly Landscape* shows how various kinds of land, including urban gardens, suburban parks, and farms, can be enhanced to support diverse pollinator populations. Sample planting designs and fifty pages of illustrated plant lists facilitate selection of the best plants for any region.

For more info: <http://www.xerces.org>

## Eastern Box Turtle Reporting



The Virginia Herpetological Society is starting a long-term eastern box turtle monitoring project. They encourage folks to report their sightings using a form on their website: <http://virginiahertpetologicalsociety.com/index.html>

## Virginia Outdoor Federation

### – News Release, January 5, 2011

A century-old family farm in southern Pittsylvania County has become home to the 600,000th acre protected by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), Virginia's largest land conservation organization, VOF Executive Director Bob Lee announced today.

Hill View Farm's owners, Bob and Billie Pollok, finalized the donation of a 252-acre conservation easement on the property to VOF last week. Because of the public benefits of protecting open space, habitat, water quality, and other conservation values, landowners who donate easements in Virginia can receive state and federal tax benefits.

VOF now holds more than 3,100 easements covering 606,534 acres. That is more conservation easements than are held by any other land trust in the nation. For more info: <http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org>

## Cornell Lab of Ornithology Study: Bird Behavior at Feeders

Last winter, FeederWatch staff began a research project focusing on the feeding behaviors of wild birds. Lab researchers and Cornell University students attached passive integrated transponder tags to the leg bands of 129 black-capped chickadees, whitebreasted nuthatches, tufted titmice, and house finches. Each tag (weighing less than 0.1 gram) transmits an identification number that is read by special bird feeders equipped with an antenna, battery, and circuit board. The feeders are placed in wooded areas around the Cornell campus, and record the exact time and date of each visit by a tagged bird. More than 600,000 visits were logged by the 129 birds between November 2009 and April 2010.

Initial results show that individual birds may take up to 200 black-oil sunflower seeds per day. Many of these seeds are cached for later consumption. Most chickadees tended to frequent one or two feeding stations located within 109 yards of one another, but several birds abandoned one feeder site and moved as far as 0.6 mi to another feeding location.

Staff are expanding the project, building additional "wired" feeders, and tagging more birds. Research will focus on the influence of weather and forest fragmentation on feeding, caching behavior and overwinter survival. To learn more visit [www.feederwatch.org/RFID](http://www.feederwatch.org/RFID).

*Source: FeederWatch Winter Bird Highlights 2010*

## How Birds Cope With Cold Winter Weather

When the weather is very cold and windy you may wonder how birds survive in such conditions. Birds have many ways of keeping warm. They may fluff up their feathers, which makes air pockets to provide more insulation when they are cold. They may shiver which raises their metabolic rate and generates more body heat. On sunny days, they may turn their back toward the sun, which heats the skin and feathers.

Physically, birds' legs and feet are covered with scales that minimize heat loss and they control the temperature by constricting the blood flow in these areas.

At night some species huddle together to keep warm. They may gather in shrubs or trees and sometimes in bluebird boxes. Birds like chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches may spend the nights in a hole in a tree limb, or an old fence post.

Birds' body temperature is much higher than in humans and at night they enter a state of torpor, which reduces their metabolism, and requires fewer calories to keep warm.

In cold weather, birds feed until dark to help them keep warm all night. Don't worry - birds know how to keep warm in winter.

*Yulee Larner  
Reprinted from The Staunton News Leader*

## Bird Count Yields 78 Species

On December 18, 2010, Augusta Bird Club conducted its 45th Christmas Bird Count. Twenty-two members in seven groups of two to four, plus three feeder watchers, identified 78 species and 13,909 individuals. They spent 72 hours in the field and traveled 445.50 miles. Each group was assigned a definite territory within in a circular area fifteen miles in diameter, centered at Verona.

Allen Larner was coordinator of the count and will send the results to the Audubon Society. The count took place two days after the area's first snowfall when most still water was frozen. In spite of these cold, wintry weather conditions, the total count was well over the average of seventy-two; 135 is the cumulative total for the forty-five years.

Several records "broke the book," meaning it was a higher count, later date, or other records better than the "Birds of Augusta County" published in 2008. The book breaking records include 9 Cooper's hawks, 3 merlins, 69 red-bellied woodpeckers, 182 tufted titmice, 732 white-throated sparrows, 374 white-crowned sparrows, 1695 dark-eyed juncos, and 344 northern cardinals. Also, the three red-shouldered hawks match our previous peak count. One black-and-white warbler was Augusta County's second winter record.

Two groups spent four hours at night searching for owls; they found two great-horned owls, and the short-eared owl has returned to Bells Lane. The observers identified thirteen species of waterfowl, including one snow goose, seven species of hawks, and six species of woodpeckers. Another rather uncommon record was the total of five pine siskins.

Sixteen species have been reported on all forty-five counts; eighteen species have been seen only once, including the black-and-white warbler this year.

The first Christmas Bird Count was held in the year 1900, when Frank Chapman proposed that observers count birds on Christmas day as an alternative to the "side hunt" in which teams competed to see who could shoot the most birds. That year twenty-seven conservationists in twenty-five localities conducted the first CBC.

More than 2,000 counts are held each year in all fifty states, every Canadian province, as well as parts of Central and South America, Bermuda, the West Indies and Pacific Islands. It is the longest continuous bird census in the world, and information gained enables scientists to determine the status of all species.

Our thanks to dedicated observers who participated in our 45th Christmas Bird Count and looking forward to the 46th.

*Yulee Larner  
Reprinted from The Staunton News Leader*



**ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB 2011 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

President: Elly Wefel 977-0636

VP (Programs) Bill Grant 389-3294

VP (Membership): Eleanor Dye 890-1627

Treasurer: Robin Austin 929-9071

Secretary: Candy Andrzejewski 365-2508

Directors at Large: Eunice Hudgins 389-4056 and Alyce Quinn 719-0109

Field Trips: Beth Griffin 265-4853

Publications: Carol Siler 725-1609

Publicity: Maureen Eiger 342-4890

Bluebird Trail: Alyce Quinn 719-0109

[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

How did you hear about the club?

**2011 Membership Dues**

**Name(s):**

**Address:**

**City:**

**ST:**

**Zip:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

**Mail To: Roanoke Valley Bird Club**  
**c/o Eleanor Dye**  
**P.O. Box 74**  
**Vinton, VA 24179-0074**

**Dues**

Individual \$12 \_\_\_\_\_

Family \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

Student \$7 \_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining \$30 \_\_\_\_\_

Adopt-a-Bluebird \$15 \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Submitted \$ \_\_\_\_\_