



January 2012 Newsletter

*Celebrating 55 Years
of Birding! 1957-2012*

INSIDE:

Field Trips.....	2
Field Notes.....	2
Sightings.....	3
Project Feederwatch 2010-2011 Highlights.....	3
Help Train Merlin.....	3
Master Naturalists Install Wood Duck Boxes at Smith Mountain Lake.....	3
Winter Raptor Count Form	

Visit our club's website:
www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

December Meeting

Sam and Liz Williams presented a very enjoyable program on *The Backyard Birds of Kenya*.

Annual Raptor Count, Saturday Feb. 11



Red-shouldered Hawk

Plan to spend a few hours driving away the winter blues on Saturday, February 11. The annual Raptor Count is a great excuse to get out of the house and do some winterbirding! No skill required, just a little time and effort.

We count all the hawks that we can find. Points don't really matter much. It's just a reason to get together with your birding buddies and enjoy a winter outing. Use the form in this newsletter to keep track of your sightings.

E-mail or mail the results to Anne Tucker. The winner gets bragging rights! Even the New River Valley Bird Club participates in this count! You should too. Inclement weather date will be Sunday, February 12.

2012 RVBC Dues

If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please do so. Complete the form on the back of the newsletter and send it and your check to **Eleanor Dye**.

Next Meeting:

January 9, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church

Randy Thrasher, a VSO Life Member, and his wife, Ann, from Lynchburg will present *Calypso Birding in Trinidad and Tobago*.

Bill Grant will also have photos and possibly a short video on the Selasphorus hummingbird that has been hanging out in Salem.

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



Red-shouldered Hawk

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN

LAURA BELTRAN (266-3773)

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

Monthly Mid-Week Walk at the Cherry Blossom Trail

Botetourt County Wednesday, January 18, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Join Laura Beltran (266-3773) at the Cherry Blossom Trail in Botetourt County each month to see how the bird life changes from winter to spring. Off of Rt. 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.

Backyard Birding

Saturday, January 21, 9 a.m.

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 nine 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 see turkeys. Light refreshments will be provided. Meet at 8:45 AM at the lower level of Towers Mall (bank side) to carpool. Laura Beltran (266-3773) will lead the way.

Burke's Garden in Tazewell County

Saturday, January 28, All Day

Join leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) for an all day outing at Burke's Garden. This high, scenic valley regularly has golden eagles, bald eagles, rough-legged hawks, red-headed woodpeckers, and sometimes loggerhead shrikes. Rarities of some kind are a virtual certainty. Meet Bill at the Orange Market in Hanging Rock (on Route 311 near I-81, exit 141) at 6:30 a.m. to carpool. It's a 2 ½ hour drive from Roanoke, so pack snacks and a lunch. Also wear layers due to the high elevations. If snow or ice is predicted, the trip will be cancelled or re-scheduled since it involves driving winding mountain roads.

VSO Outer Banks of North Carolina

February 3-5

The Outer Banks always has great waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, along with a wide assortment of land birds.

The Comfort Inn at Kill Devil Hills will be the trip

headquarters. The special VSO room rate is \$65 for oceanfront and \$60 for street side plus tax. Contact information for the hotel is: 1601 S. Virginia Dare Trail, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27948; Phone: 252-441-6333; fax 252-441-7779. Reservations must be made by January 13, to get the special VSO rate.

Meals are on your own. A complimentary breakfast buffet breakfast is included with your stay. Participants should bring lunch provisions for Friday (optional trip) and Saturday.

A program of events and announcements will be available at the front desk on Friday morning.

Friday: A day-trip to Lake Mattamuskeet will be led by Lee Adams, who has explored this area with NC birding groups and knows all the "hot spots!" An evening orientation and slide program will be presented in the conference room near the lobby.

Saturday: Day will be spent visiting the impoundments of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Sunday: We'll travel in caravan to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

Come prepared for variable weather. If you have any questions, contact Bill Akers at 540-951-7692 or bill.akersj@comcast.net or Meredith Bell at 804-824-4958 or merandlee@gmail.com.

FIELD NOTES

Christmas Bird Count, Fincastle

The Fincastle Christmas Bird Count was held on Dec. 18. 29 hardy birders in 13 parties experienced normal mid-December weather to search for birds.

79 species were recorded with the best find being a "fly-over" of a flock of Snow Geese spotted by Sissy Logan, Janie and Norris Ford, and Susan Kidd. All 7 species of woodpeckers were found, but pine siskin and red-breasted nuthatch were not seen, and only one purple finch and one ruby-crowned kinglet were sighted. Somewhat uncommon birds were recorded by Wes Teets at Greenfield (as expected). He found northern harrier, horned lark, common grackle, savannah sparrow, Wilson's snipe, and ring-billed gulls. My thanks to everyone who helped with the count.

Barry Kinzie, Compiler

Christmas Bird Count, Peaks of Otter Highlights

Sixteen birders searched areas above 1500 feet elevation near the Peaks of Otter on Dec and found 36 species and

a total of 604 individual birds. The best bird of the day was the very rare loggerhead shrike, spotted at a slightly lower



elevation, but well within the 7.5 mile radius count circle. From the windows at the lodge while eating breakfast we saw 6 pied-billed grebes birds on the lake. We didn't find a grouse. Sadly that beautiful bird is getting very hard to find.

Loggerhead Shrike

Barry Kinzie, Compiler

SIGHTINGS

Dec. 3: At Smith Mountain Lake, Mike Smith and Kent Davis saw a clay-colored sparrow on a small bank by the side of the road leading into the park in a mixed conifer and hardwood area. They saw it in bright light at close range, and got a 360 degree view.

Late Dec.. Sissy Logan reported a rufous hummingbird at the home of Pam Ogden on Academy Street in Salem. It has been there since early fall. Sissy has seen the bird daily and "up close and personal." While Sissy was in the process of changing the sugar water this past Saturday, it fed from three of the ports as Sissy held the feeder.

Project FeederWatch 2010-2011 Highlights

Last season, FeederWatch participants in Canada noted high counts of several species:

- Close to 200 evening grosbeaks were sighted in British Columbia.
- In Walsingham, Ontario a watcher sighted 70 rusty blackbirds at her feeder.
- Over 1000 common redpolls were sighted in Upper Woodstock, New Brunswick. The FeederWatcher went though a 20 kg bag of nyjer seed the week the redpolls were sighted.
- In Camp Morton, Manitoba 800 snow buntings were sighted on Jan. 1. Each day the buntings consumed 50-60 pounds of white millet.

How to Count Large Flocks: To estimate the number of birds in a flock, first, count the birds in an imaginary block to include only 10 to 25 birds. Then visually superimpose the block onto the entire flock and estimate how many times it fits. Finally, multiply this number by the number of birds in the original block.

Other Items of Note:

- In 2010-2011, house finches were seen at more feeder locations than any other species.
- Downy woodpeckers were seen at more feeder locations than in any previous season.
- Average flock sizes were down for many species.

The average maximum flock size for white-crowned sparrow and American goldfinch were the lowest on record. Dark-eyed junco and mourning dove flocks dipped to near-record lows. (Dark-eyed juncos, however visit more than 80% of all FeederWatcher locations.)

- In the last 25 years red-bellied woodpeckers and Carolina wrens have expanded their ranges northward, possibly because of changing climate and/or the growing popularity of birdfeeding.

Southeast and South-Central Region Highlights:

- Pine Warblers were reported at more locations than ever before.
- More FeederWatchers reported eastern bluebirds and ruby-crowned kinglets last winter than ever before.
- Common grackle sightings dropped to the lowest number in the 25 year history of Project FeederWatch.
- European starlings were reported at fewer locations and fell to their lowest ranking in FeederWatch history.
- House sparrow numbers dropped.
- Notable rare sightings included a western tanager in Williamsburg and a broad-billed hummingbird in Florida.

For more info visit: www.feederwatch.org

Help Train Merlin

The Cornell lab of Ornithology is building a new bird ID tool and they could use your help. The Merlin Project is a computer-assisted ID wizard designed to help people ID birds. The goal is to make it available to users of the All About Birds website. Site users will be able to narrow down an ID by answering questions about what they saw. You can help train Merlin at www.allaboutbirds.org/labs.

Master Naturalists Install Wood Duck Boxes at Smith Mountain Lake



Master Naturalists Rich Brager & Dick LeRoy installed three wood duck boxes at the SML park in December. Rich and Dick are members of The Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes Master Naturalist (BRFAL).

Wood Ducks are very shy cavity nesters that require a specialized habitat.

They seek cover in cattails, marsh grasses and dense brush near the water's edge of lakes and ponds. The undeveloped shorelines of Smith Mountain Lake State Park offer wood ducks a respite.

The state park has a dozen wood duck boxes in various states of repair. The BRFAL has chosen to supply GPS info and repair or replace these nest boxes as one of their service projects.

For more information on the BRFAL go to <http://www.brfal.org>

WINTER RAPTOR COUNT

February 11, 2012

Participants _____

Date _____ Time started _____ Time completed _____

Location _____

SPECIES	POINTS	NUMBER	NOTES	TOTAL
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 50 Points

However, keep your totals. There is a 10 point bonus on peak

**Maximum 100 Points

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.

The completed tally sheet can be emailed to billt3256@gmail.com or mailed to Anne Tucker, 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta VA 24121.

Contact Anne (540) 721-1573 if you have questions.

Vinton, VA 24179-0074

P.O. Box 74



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 & Alyce Quinn 719-0109

Field Trips: Laura Beltran 366-3773

Publications: Carol Siler 725-1609

Publicity: Maureen Eiger 342-4890

Bluebird Trail: Alyce Quinn 719-0109

www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com

How did you hear about the club?

2012 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 \$ _____