



# September 2011 Newsletter

*Celebrating 54 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2011*

## NEXT MEETING:

September 12, 7:00 p.m.  
Grandin Court Baptist  
Church

## SEPTEMBER MEETING

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and The Wildlife Center of Virginia released a Golden Eagle on February 16 at Harveys Knob. Carol Whiteside will share photos of the event and report on the eagle's journey since the release.

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

## MAY MEETING

Carl Boast presented an update of his *Feathered Friends of Florida*, showing photos from a winter visit to the National Wildlife Refuges in southern Florida.

### *Silent Auction: Roger Tory Peterson Framed Prints*

At the September meeting, John and Eunice Hudgins will have two 16" x 20" matted and framed Roger Tory Peterson prints—one of Peregrine Falcons and one of Barn Owl—to sell with the proceeds going to the club. The pictures will be on display at the meeting. Fill out the ballot with the amount you are willing to pay for each picture (suggest bidding odd amounts such as \$26.13 rather than \$26.00), sign your name along with your e-mail address or phone number and drop it in the box. The person bidding the highest amount for each picture will be notified. Pay our treasurer at the October meeting and take your picture home.

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Visit our club's website:  
[www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

## RVBC Annual Seed Sale Fund Raiser November 5, 2011

### Quality Bird Seed at Reasonable Prices!

*This is the Club's major annual fund raiser and we greatly appreciate your support.* Tell your friends, relatives and neighbors and spread the love of nature. You don't have to be a club member to purchase our bird seed. The proceeds help the club support community outreach efforts. You need not buy lots of seed but if you feed birds at all you will find the products **an excellent value.** *And if you don't have room to store lots of seed, consider buying a small bag.*

**The Seed Sale will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Northwest True Value Hardware Company near Hollins on Route 11.** The store is a half mile south of the entrance to Hollins College. 7650 Williamson Road • Roanoke, VA 24019 • (540) 362-2112

*The October newsletter will include the form for placing your orders. (The order form will also be available on the RVBC website.)*

If you would like to volunteer to help set up, keep track of orders, visit with the public, and load bags, please contact Alyce Quinn: [twoquinns@yahoo.com](mailto:twoquinns@yahoo.com) or phone: 719-0109; or Eunice Hudgins: [uvaau@aol.com](mailto:uvaau@aol.com) or phone: 389-4056.

### 2012 Annual Dues

It's time to renew your membership. Please complete the form on the back of the newsletter and send it and your check to **Eleanor Dye.**

## Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2011 Calendar: Entries Due Sept. 12

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Photos or artwork by members can be submitted at any time up to the September 12 RVBC meeting. The images should be in 8 x 10 horizontal (landscape) format suitable for scanning and reproduction. Please put a brief description on a label on the back of the submission indicating the subject, location and time of year (month or season) depicted. Do not include any self identifying information on the submission label. Do, however, provide your name on an accompanying sheet. A committee will select the final images for the calendar from the received submissions. Submitted materials will be returned. Please submit entries by September 12 to Carl Boast: 3368 Hickory Cove Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. Or give submissions directly to Carl at the May meeting, the August picnic, or any other time you see him on or before Sept. 12.

If you would like to be on the selection committee please contact Carl at:

[carlandlinda@earthlink.net](mailto:carlandlinda@earthlink.net) or phone: 540-297-7336.

## Harveys Knob Hawkwatch Begins Sept. 1

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September is a great time to watch for raptors. Bald Eagles and Ospreys tend to migrate early in the season.

For more information, and to help with watching, contact Bill James: 563-9248, Baron Gibson: 797-5958; or Joyce Holt: 384-6674.

## FIELD TRIPS

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CHAIRMAN

BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

### Peaks of Otter, Sept 17, 8:00 AM

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Meet leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) at the Peaks of Otter Lodge (not Visitor's Center) at 8:00. He will lead a leisurely stroll around Abbott Lake in search of fall migrants. Expect about 1 mile of easy walking though the part through the woods is not level. Afterwards, those who desire can join us for breakfast at the Peaks of Otter Lodge. This is always an enjoyable trip.

### Take A Chance, Sept 24, 7:30 AM

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Long time club member Susan Kidd (966-0037) will host a field trip in Botetourt County. She has a great morning planned but wants to emphasize that she is just the host and birders will be expected to pool their skills to identify

the birds. Because of the variety of habitats, spotting scopes and waterproof shoes are recommended. We will meet at Botetourt Commons by the Bojangles at 7:30 am to carpool. From there we will head to Woodpecker Ridge, and then Greenfield before going to her home outside of Fincastle to bird her property. She has three acres including streams and forested areas and has had bobwhites, nesting red-tailed hawks and a pair of great blue herons among the 57 species she has sighted over the past two years. This is a new location for the club and Susan has generously offered to provide a light lunch for the birders at her home at the conclusion of the trip. Because this is a new home with hardwood floors, please leave your shoes on the deck when entering the house.

## FIELD NOTES

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### May 7, Warbler Road

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The weather was perfect for birding. Sixty species were sighted. *Warblers*: chat, redstart, prairie, prothonotary, northern parula, black-throated green, black-throated blue, ovenbird, black-and-white, worm-eating, blackpoll, hooded, cerulean, chestnut-sided, Louisiana, and northern waterthrush.

*Vireos*: white-eyed, blue-headed, warbling, red-eyed, and yellow-throated

*Others*: indigo bunting, red-tailed hawk, Baltimore and orchard orioles, yellow-billed cuckoo, cedar waxwing, wood thrush, brown thrasher, blue-gray gnatcatcher, red-winged blackbird, pewee, scarlet tanager, ruffed grouse, Swainson's thrush, common raven, rose-breasted grosbeak, dark-eyed junco, turkey, great crested flycatcher, and barn swallow.

### June 11, Revisiting the Whitesides'

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Eight birders enjoyed a beautiful morning at Carol Whiteside's Roanoke County home. Sitting on the back porch overlooking a pond, watching bird feeders and nesting boxes was a relaxing way to enjoy some of the 29 species of birds recorded. Carol led the group on trails throughout her property—one ended with Jolene, one of Carol's mules, offering a friendly greeting. While sitting in the yard enjoying watermelon and roasted peanuts, we saw a broad-winged hawk, a red-tailed hawk, a northern harrier and chimney swifts all in the same binocular view. Carol, sorry we didn't see the female wood duck that flew in right after we left. Thanks for having us.

### July 9, Lick Run Greenway

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Rupert Cutler led seven birders on an early morning four-mile walk on the City of Roanoke's Lick Run Greenway trail, from Burrell Street (Washington Park

pool) almost to Valley View Mall and back. Conditions were excellent following rain the previous evening. Thirty species were sighted or heard, including great blue heron, yellow-crowned night heron, rock dove, mourning dove, chimney swift, ruby-throated hummingbird, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, northern flicker, blue jay, American crow, chickadee, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, house wren, wood thrush, American robin, gray catbird, northern mockingbird, brown thrasher, European starling, eastern towhee, chipping sparrow, song sparrow, northern cardinal, indigo bunting, common grackle, house finch, American goldfinch, and house sparrow. Birders included visitor, Laura Beltran, formerly of Atlanta.

## August 6, Summer Open House

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Under a cloudy sky with temperatures in the 70s, Robin Austin led eight birders around the Bent Mountain area for a delightful morning of birding. The birding started with trying to count the more than thirty ruby-throated hummingbirds at the feeders. The little gems were drinking more than two gallons of sugar water a day! Other birds added to the list were: American goldfinch, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina chickadee, northern mockingbird, song sparrow, American robin, gray catbird, American crow, field sparrow, house wren, blue jay, red-winged blackbird, house finch, European starling, Eastern meadowlark, chipping sparrow, Carolina wren, mourning dove, rose-breasted grosbeak, purple finch, green heron, Eastern bluebird, barn swallow, northern cardinal, turkey vulture, common raven, downy woodpecker, cedar waxwing, tufted titmouse, indigo bunting, Eastern wood-pewee, eastern towhee, chimney swift and red-shouldered hawk.

Allen had hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill when we returned to the house. Fresh green beans with new potatoes, barbecue, salads, various side dishes and desserts were on the table for lunch.

The hope of hearing owls and whip-poor-wills around an evening campfire was, unfortunately, rained out. Thank you, Allen and Robin, for a fun day on Bent Mountain.

## SIGHTINGS

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*August 14:* Rupert Cutler saw an American redstart and several blue-gray gnatcatchers. on the Lick Run Greenway.

*August 16:* Rupert Cutler sighted a brown creeper and a red-eyed vireo. Rupert doesn't commonly see red-eyed vireos on Lick Run. The vireo was singing, which may be unusual in the fall.

*August 23:* Kent Davis reported sighting an olive-sided flycatcher at Fenwick Mines.

*August 24:* Bill Grant saw nine common nighthawks at Salem Memorial Baseball Stadium. They began entering the Stadium at 8:20 pm and worked the lights taking every insect available until the last bird departed at 9:27.

*August 28:* Rupert Cutler saw a great crested flycatcher and an American redstart at milepost 2.1 on the Lick Run Greenway.

## VSO Fall Field Trip

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**Chincoteague, VA, September 16-18, 2011**

*Leaders: Bill Akers and Jerry Via*

The Refuge Inn on Beach Road in Chincoteague will be the host hotel (800-544-8469 or 757-336-5511).

A Friday evening orientation and slide program will be presented at 8:00 PM in the hotel conference room. Jerry and Bill Akers will also give a preview of birds in the area and a synopsis of the field trips for the weekend.

You can select from a variety of field trips: "Morning Warbler Walk" on the Woodland Trail to look for migrating songbirds; "Motorcade to Assateague Beach," with frequent stops to look at shorebirds; and "Birding and Biking" to explore the wildlife loop.

A Saturday Specialty Tour bus trip to the Wash Flats is planned for 1:00 pm on Sat. This is a restricted area in the refuge. Shorebirds and raptors are often abundant in this area. The cost per person is \$12 for VSO members and \$17 for non-members. If you want to go on this trip, you must make a reservation in advance with Meredith Bell, VSO field trip co-chair, merandlee@cox.net or 804-824-4958. If you have any questions, contact Meredith Bell, VSO field trip co-chair: 804-824-4958 or merandlee@cox.net.

## Magee Marsh in May

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*L to R: Eunice Hudgins, Connie Marsh, Pam Wefel, Linda Cory, and Andy Biggs.*

In the second week of May, twelve Roanoke Valley Bird Club members visited Ohio's Magee Marsh.

The weather was pleasant and the birds were plentiful. More than 100 species were recorded which included more than 25 species of warblers.

It was a first-time visit for Bob Rummel, Linda Cory, Connie Marsh, and Kent Davis. Bob had a total of 20 life birds which included 14 warblers! He said, "Watching the Connecticut warbler wander through the underbrush," was his favorite moment. He added, "An amazing place. I'll plan to go again." Linda did not get any life birds, but her favorite moment was a little pool near the entrance to the boardwalk. "I've never seen so many different fantastic species at one time. A blackpoll warbler was splashing, having the bath of a lifetime, oblivious that there were people within a few feet of him. Right next to him was a red-breasted nuthatch and a Swainson's thrush. Flitting around the puddle were magnolia, bay-breasted, Canada warblers and a redstart. This is a memory that will always be with me."

Kent commented, "Magee was just like you said it would be. Best place I have ever been for the number of migrants, number of rarities, number of birders, and number of photographers. One word would be amazing." On his way to Magee, Kent stopped at Fernald Nature Preserve in Hamilton, Ohio, to see a life bird, the garganey, a rare European migrant. Elly and Pam Wefel added the Connecticut warbler to their life list and, along with the gray-cheeked thrush, were their favorite trip birds. Pam commented, "Even though the weather was not at its peak, we did some damage on locating and SEEING (and I don't mean "butt" shots either) birds. The pace was nice and easy and the tally after a day of birding was very relaxing – so was happy hour."

Bob and Andy Biggs didn't get any lifers, but Andy commented, "My favorite part of our trip was getting nice long looks at a mourning warbler, a Connecticut warbler and a whip-poor-will all in the same field of view. Comparing the Mourning and Connecticut was fun. Finding the whip-poor-will was a challenge because it was so well camouflaged."

Tom and Pat Johnson both added the Connecticut warbler to their life lists, but Pat also added the Lincoln's sparrow and willow flycatcher. The black-billed cuckoo was Tom's favorite trip bird – Pat said hers would have been the elusive yellow-headed blackbird they chased without finding. They added, "With multiple other places to explore in the area, we never get to them because the birds are so good at Magee."

"The best concentration of spring migrants we have ever found is Magee Marsh," say John and Eunice Hudgins. "The 0.6 mile boardwalk through the marsh and beach-

side woods are easy walking and allow close-up eye-level views of birds. Seeing birds we don't normally find around the Roanoke area such as the blackburnian, Cape May, mourning, Nashville, Connecticut and bay-breasted warblers and the Philadelphia vireo is exciting. We also had good looks at a woodcock, a whip-poor-will and asleep in a single tree – three common nighthawks! How neat is that?"

If you've never been to Magee Marsh, put it on your calendar for a future trip. For more information visit: [www.mageemarsh.com](http://www.mageemarsh.com)

## **Big Spring Day At The Peaks Of Otter– May 7, 2011**

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Another fine day was in store for the 41st Big Spring Day count, and the final tally was 117 species.

Birds were relatively scarce this year despite the optimum weather and count date, but we did get new high counts for three species—great blue heron, bluebird and worm-eating warbler. A total of fourteen Great Blue Herons were found at a newly discovered rookery on the Otter River near Centreville, six more than the previous high for this count. This species continues to expand its breeding range well inland of its historic coastal locations. There were also high numbers for red-tailed hawk, blue-headed vireo, black-and-white warbler, ovenbird, and hooded warbler.

Perhaps the best bird of the day was the sandhill crane found by David Holt at Harvey's Knob, a first for the count. The all-time total is now up to 197 species. Since 1993, when Harveys Knob became a count area, eight species have been added to the cumulative list, and five of these were from Harveys Knob. Other good finds included the hermit thrush (11 previous counts) and the American woodcock (12 previous counts).

We missed ruby-crowned kinglet again, after finding it on 38 of the first 39 counts; perhaps they are not wintering as far south as they used to. Other misses were blue-winged warbler (35), ruffed grouse (34), eastern screech-owl (31) and white-crowned sparrow (30). Other species not found but which we get more often than not were magnolia warbler, northern waterthrush, barred owl, swamp sparrow, savannah sparrow (seen in the count area two days before), and purple finch. There were also very low counts for belted kingfisher, killdeer, bobwhite, and white-eyed vireo.

Segments of the count area were covered by the following parties:

- A. Fallingwater Cascades-Liz Williams, Linda Barker, Carol Siler
- B. Buchanan-Alyce Quinn, Anne Allen, Bill & Anne Tucker, Beth Griffin
- C. Sheep Creek Road-Susan Stanton, Glennys Sheppard, Susan Wingfield
- D. Parkers Gap (Warbler) Road-Thelma & John Dalmas

- E. Jennings/North/Middle/McFalls Creeks-John & Eunice Hudgins, Pam Wefel
- F. Bedford Lake, Wheats Valley, Stoney/Overstreet Ck.-Peggy Lyons, Joanne Pierce, Peter Jowaisis, Dale Miller
- G. Goose Creek Valley-Janie & Norris Ford, Sissy Logan, Susan Kidd
- H. Thaxton, Penicks Mill-Bill Opengari, Mary Ratliff, George Blonar
- I. Arcadia, Solitude-Barry Kinzie, Bob Miller, Ed Burroughs, Kent Davis, Mike Smith
- K. Johnson Farm, Visitors Center-Tim Quinn, Carl & Linda Boast, Candy Andrzejewski
- L. Harvey's Knob Overlook-Joyce & David Holt, Andy Biggs (+ Liz Williams & Linda Barker in PM)
- M. Parkway Black Horse Gap N to Floyds Field-Linda Cory, Deborah Ingram
- N. Centerville/Claytor Center-Rexanne Bruno, Gene Sattler, Jim & Sandra Elder, Norm Porter, John Styrsky, Judy Wiegand, Ben Shrader

This is the last year that Thelma and I will be compiling the Big Spring Day count. Thanks to everyone for your support over the past sixteen years. We do plan to participate on our 40th count next year, which is currently scheduled for May 5, 2012.

*John Dalmas*

## Purple Martin Seminar



On July 9, armed with binoculars, cameras, and notepads, several members of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club took part in a seminar on Purple Martins provided by Bill Pecoraro at his home in Isle

of Pines on Smith Mountain Lake. Also attending were several members of the Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes (BRFAL) Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalist Program (VMNP) and some independent interested individuals.

Bill is a retired Environmental Science teacher with diverse interests including, fishing, kayaking, gardening and bee keeping in addition to his passion for purple martins. He has established a colony of approximately 140 birds at his dock. Over the 2011 season, he has had 40 adults, 40 sub-adults and 60-70 young birds. For over several hundred years the purple martin (really a swallow) has become totally dependent on humans to provide suitable nesting sites in Eastern North America.

The female martin is picky and chooses sites based on location (near water, away from trees, high enough) and site features (long entry way, small entry, vented and insulated, with good perches away from the entry). Predators and competitors can be problems but those threats can be



reduced. Decoys placed on perch sites can cut down on hawk attacks. Providing suitable nearby housing for tree swallows can make nest sites more available, and reduce territorial behavior.

Purple martins are insect eaters and usually eat on the fly. Their diet includes dragonflies, cicadas, occasionally butterflies, along with mosquitoes, and other small insects.

These migrating birds show nest fidelity and often return to the same colony year after year. During their stay at Smith Mountain Lake, they breed, taking approximately 6 weeks total from egg-laying to fledging young. They will leave as a colony in mid-August.

After leaving the lake area, they go to secondary roosting areas where several hundred birds may congregate. They



then fly to major roosting areas (including the Richmond Farmer's Market) where as many as 10,000 birds may gather before heading to the Gulf of Mexico and south to Brazil for the winter.

Bill stressed that there is much to know about providing appropriate housing to help, not hinder, the purple martins and that the Purple Martin Conservation Association can provide information and assistance.

For those interested in beginning a colony of their own, Bill advised finding a mentor to help save money and to establish the site more quickly.

*Carl Boast*

