



December 2011 Newsletter

*Celebrating 54 Years
of Birding! 1957-2011*

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

Next Meeting:

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

Sam and Liz Williams will present a program on *The Backyard Birds of Kenya*.

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

November Meeting

Dave Kramar, a doctoral candidate in the College of Natural Resources and Environment's Department of Geography at Virginia Tech, presented a program on bald eagles.

Holiday Party!

In addition to having a terrific program in December, we will also be having our annual food fest—er, holiday party. Remember to bring something delightfully good to share.

Exciting News: Barry Kinzie's recently published *Birds and Birding in the Roanoke Valley* will be for sale at the December RVBC meeting (before and after) for \$15.00. After the meeting the book can be purchased by mailing a \$16.50 check to Alyce Quinn, 681 Edgewood Farm Ln., Wirtz, VA 24184. The book is also for sale at Ram's Head Books at Towers Mall in Roanoke. (See article on page 4.)

Congratulations to Barry and to everyone who contributed to the project. The book is a valuable addition to the birding lexicon.

RVBC 2012 Calendar

The 2012 RVBC calendar sales have been brisk. So far, 49 calendars have been distributed and 9 more are spoken for. A few calendars will be available at the Dec. RVBC meeting, but if you know you want one (or more), it would be best to contact Carl Boast (carlandlind-aboast@earthlink.net) so that additional calendars can be printed if needed.

2012 Annual 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**.

2012 RVBC Officers

The following officers were elected to serve the Roanoke Valley Bird Club for 2012:

President - Elly Wefel

Vice President/Program - Bill Grant

Vice President/Membership - Eleanor Dye

Treasurer- Robin Austin

Secretary - Candy Andrzejewski

Directors at Large - Eunice Hudgins and Alyce Quinn
Although they do not require a vote by the membership, the following have agreed to head up committees for 2012:

Field Trips – Laura Beltran

Publications – Carol Siler

Publicity – Maureen Eiger

Seed Sale Fund Raiser Results

It was a beautiful day for our very successful annual seed sale on November 5. The \$1,146.62 seed profit was not as large as last year, but very good when we consider that a few of our best customers are not feeding this winter due to a bear invasion on their property. We certainly hope the bears find another source of food or someone figures a way to outsmart them.

In addition to the sale of seed, we received a very generous donation which boosted our sale profit to \$1,227.58 making this our largest seed sale ever! Thank you Carol Whiteside.

Lots of non-members responded to our advertising. Thanks to Maureen Eiger and Genevieve Goss for great newspaper coverage, Bill Grant and Maureen for their TV appearance, Elly Wefel for internet coverage, and Carol Siler for the articles in our newsletter.

A big thanks goes to Mary Lou Barritt for keeping track of on-site sales, and to Candy Andrzejewski for stepping in at the last minute when Mary Lou had to leave.

Edna Brooks of Roanoke was the winner of a free membership drawing. *Welcome to the club, Edna.*

Thanks to Pam Wefel, Mary Lou Barritt, and Liz Williams for the delicious refreshments.

Many thanks to Mike Belcher, Robin & Allen Austin, Laurie Spangler, Dick Hendrix, Linda Boast, Liz Williams, Pam Wefel, Tim Quinn, Jerry & Rita O'Brien, and Pat Popper for helping to load seed for our customers. And, to Carl Boast and Dale Stellhorn who were on hand to sell our 2012 club calendars and bluebird boxes. We could not have done this without your help.

—Alyce Quinn and Eunice Hudgins

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN

BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

There are no field trips scheduled for this month.

Please consider joining us for one or more Christmas Bird Counts.

Remember the Passenger Pigeon? Or Why You Should Participate in the Christmas Bird Count



If Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and other bird survey data had been available in the 1900s as it is today, the passenger pigeon might still be gracing our skies. About three to five billion passenger pigeons ranged across eastern North America and may have been the most numerous bird species in his-

tory. Sadly, the last passenger pigeon died at the Cincinnati Zoological Garden in 1914.

Participating in the CBC is vital to understanding the long-term health and status of bird populations. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a detailed picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed over the past hundred years. The long term perspective made possible by the Christmas Bird Count informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat —and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well. Local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

In the 1980s CBC data documented the decline of wintering populations of the American Black Duck, after which conservation measures were put into effect to reduce hunting pressure on this species.

In 2007, the data were instrumental in the development of two Audubon State of the Birds Reports - Common Birds in Decline, which revealed that some of America's most familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years, and WatchList 2007, which identified 178 rarer species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii that are imperiled. These reports helped scientists and policy-makers identify threats to birds and habitat, and promote broad awareness of the need to address them.

—Audubon.com

Christmas Bird Counts Dates

If you are thinking of doing your first Christmas Bird Count, be prepared to have fun and meet some new people. You will probably visit an area you've wanted to explore with people who know it well. You'll contribute to an important cause, learn something new, see some interesting birds, and have an awesome day. Maybe it never fit your life/schedule before. Now's the time! You can do it! There are three counts coming up and observers are needed to provide adequate coverage. Please contact one or more of the following:

Roanoke – Saturday, December 17 – contact Bill Hunley (774-2397 or whunley@mbc.edu) for an assigned territory. This is an official Audubon count. The \$5 fee* per person will be paid by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club.

Fincastle – Sunday, December 18 – contact Eunice Hudgins (389-4056 or uvaau@aol.com) or Barry Kinzie (992-2743 or peckerridge@ntelos.net). This is an official Audubon count with a \$5 fee* per person. There will be homemade soup at noon at Barry's home followed by tallies of the Roanoke and Fincastle counts.

Peaks of Otter – Tuesday, December 21 – Meet at the Peaks of Otter Lodge for breakfast at 7:30 AM. Barry will set up teams depending on how many show up. If you cannot make breakfast, but will count, please contact Barry Kinzie (992-2743 or peckerridge@ntelos.net) ahead of time. Groups will meet back at the Lodge at noon for a tally and lunch. There is no fee for this count. At this higher elevation you don't see great numbers of birds, but what you see is really special and it's a lot of fun.

*\$5 fee - To find out how this money is used, please visit www.christmasbirdcount.org.

FIELD NOTES

Booker T. Washington National Monument, November 12

Birders sighted brown-headed nuthatches, brown creepers, golden-crowned kinglets, yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-shouldered hawk, common raven, and lots of cedar waxwings.

Claytor Nature Center, November 19

We had a nice size crowd at Clayton Nature Study Center. A total of 23 species were recorded. Highlights included sharp-shinned and red-tailed hawks, both kinglets and numerous white-throated sparrows, and song sparrows.

Craig County Field Trip

The prediction of snow prompted Linda Cory and John & Eunice Hudgins to cancel their October field trip to the higher elevations of Craig County. So that the day wouldn't be lost, they decided to bird Martin's Lane (near George Moore's farm) in Botetourt County. Alas, the weatherman had other ideas! Waking up at 5:00 a.m., the leaders were confronted with heavy rain. At 7:30, it was still raining, so they gave up. Sid and Mary Lou Barritt braved the weather and were rewarded with sightings of a pair of red-headed woodpeckers near Martin's Lane.

Unfortunately, a reschedule of the trip to Craig County will have to wait until early 2012 due to the hunting season and the holidays.

SIGHTINGS

Oct. 23: Barry Kinzie reported that a sedge wren had been spotted and photographed at Mason Creek (Rt. 311). Barry has seen only three sedge wrens in 40 years of birding the Roanoke Valley.

Oct. 29: Bill Hunley saw a black-billed cuckoo on Lick Run Greenway.



Sedge Wren at Mason Creek
© Jenny Frei

Nov. 4: Rupert Cutler and Fred Cramer birded the Roanoke River arm of Smith Mountain Lake from Hardy's Ford up to Back Creek and back. Highlights included: five double-crested cormorants, six great blue heron, one great egret, and one tundra swan.

Nov. 10: Kent Davis sighted a brown-headed nuthatch at Whispering Pines.

Nov. 12: Alyce and Tim Quinn saw a selasphorous hummingbird at their feeder in Burnt Chimney.

Nov. 13: Larry Hutson spotted a double-crested cormorant sitting on the floating dock of his neighbor's house on Smith Mountain Lake. This is the latest in the year that Larry has seen a cormorant on the lake.



Tundra Swan on SML © Fred Cramer

Birds and Birding in the Roanoke Valley

If you're wondering whether the bird you saw in your backyard last week was an indigo bunting or an eastern bluebird, you'll be happy to hear that a new, carefully researched guide will tell you.

In *Birds and Birding the Roanoke Valley, An Annotated Checklist and More* Troutville birder Barry L. Kinzie details the status of each of the 313 bird species ever found in the Roanoke Valley.

For serious birdwatchers, it will be indispensable. Although it does include 57 photographs, it is not meant to tell you what markings separate the bunting from the bluebird. You'll need a different book for that. But it will tell you indigo buntings are not found in the Roanoke Valley in winter and bluebirds are.

You can check on any bird that turns up. The book will let you know whether the pileated woodpecker is common (it is), what wading bird is most likely to be found nesting along the Roanoke River (the yellow-Crowned night-heron) and when to expect barn swallows in spring (March 25).

If you page through it, you will discover that common nighthawks—often called bullbats—are not as common as in the past. These birds filled the early evening sky over Roanoke in the '70s, but they are not so easy to see these days. Large flocks still migrate through in late summer, though one wonders whether anyone will see a sight to compare with the 3,700 Tom and Janet Krakauer recorded on Aug. 30, 1980.

Tom Krakauer, who taught biology at Hollins College before becoming director of the Roanoke Science Museum, also holds the record for the most robins spotted in a single day: 30,000 on Oct. 25, 1982, along Tinker Creek.

You will find out that the bald eagle, once exceedingly rare in the Roanoke Valley, is now often seen in migration. They are often winter on Carvins Cove and along larger rivers. Nobody has ever found a nest in the Roanoke Valley, but with this bird making a comeback, there's a good chance one will turn up in the next few years. Bald Eagles do nest in neighboring counties.

The bluebird, as most birdwatchers know, is also making a comeback. Scarce during the '50s and '60s, they became fairly common after many bird lovers began putting nest boxes along fencerows.

The book benefits from research into earlier ornithologists, particularly the records of Almon O. English of Roanoke and Myriam P. Moore, who for many years had a cottage in Botetourt County at the foot of Purgatory Mountain. But the foundation of the book is 40 years of bird watching and careful record-keeping by the author.

I first met Kinzie in 1971, and we have been birding in the Roanoke Valley ever since. We stumbled through an ocean of briars to find breeding Brewster's warblers on Pine Mountain, near the Blue Ridge Parkway in Botetourt. We eluded an angry three-foot long copperhead on Crawford Mountain while looking for broad-winged hawks. And we nearly plunged into a sewage lagoon at the Roanoke treatment plant when Kinzie's Pinto slipped off of the road and came to rest balanced like a seesaw above the reeking mire.

Readers of this new book will be very happy the Pinto did not topple in.

Birds and Birding the Roanoke Valley is available from Ram's Head Books at Towers Mall in Roanoke. It can be ordered by mail from the Roanoke Valley Bird Club by sending a check for \$16.50 to Alyce Quinn, 681 Edgewood Farm Lane, Wirtz, Va. 24184.

—John Pancake



Female American Redstart
© Jim Stevenson

John Pancake worked for The Roanoke Times and The World-News from 1971 until 1980 and wrote a Sunday nature column. He now lives in Goshen Pass in Rockbridge County.

Bluebird Trail Stats

Another year of monitoring our three bluebird trails has come and gone, and below are the results. Numbers of fledged bluebirds, as well as most of the other species that use the boxes, were down on all the trails this year. Do you think maybe the wet spring followed by such a hot, dry summer affected the number of insects available?

Blue Ridge Parkway			Hanging Rock Golf Course			Botetourt Swim and Golf Club		
Species	Eggs	Fledged	Species	Eggs	Fledged	Species	Eggs	Fledged
Bluebird	197	146	Bluebird	96	84	Bluebird	156	136
Tree Swallow	32	10	Tree Swallow	4	0	Tree Swallow	27	12
Carolina Chickadee	10	8	Carolina Chickadee	6	6			
House Wren	6	5	Titmouse	7	4			

We want to thank the dedicated bluebird trail monitors, without whom these trails could not exist: Ann Allen, Bob and Andy Biggs, Carl Boast, Eleanor Dye, Bill Grant, Deborah Ingram, Lily Johnston, Dick Hendrix, Alice Hylton, Ardy Kidd, Susan Kidd, Anne Markham and her Girl Scouts, Connie Marsh, Carole and Bill Massart, Bob and Sherri Miller, Rita and Jerry O'Brien, Laurie Spangler, Bill and Anne Tucker, and Carol Whiteside. We also thank Eunice Hudgins and Andy Biggs for making reminder phone calls to all the monitors.

—*from Tim and Alyce Quinn, and Elly and Pam Wefel, Bluebird Trail Co-Chairmen*

Do You Know All the Birds at Your Feeders?

Most of the birds that come to our feeder in this area of Augusta County are permanent residents and you see them the year round. One of the most familiar are the cardinals. This year I'm sure they nested close by, since I have seen six coming to the feeders. They molted some of their feathers and were sort of dull grayish color but now they are beginning to get bright red again.

If you feed the birds in this area, I imagine you can identify these familiar species – this includes the Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, blue jay, crow, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, house sparrow, house finch, goldfinch and three species of woodpeckers. The birds we see only in winter are the white-throated sparrow and dark-eyed junco. Usually you will see them feeding on the ground. Watch carefully in winter when we may be lucky and see a rare bird such as the red-breasted nuthatch, purple finch, pine siskin, and yellow-bellied sapsucker.

Many times readers have asked me what are the best seeds to attract the most birds. Black oil sunflower seeds have the best nutrition and they attract all the feeder birds. Also, there are good mixed seeds, which include millet, corn, wheat, and other grains.

Peanuts are a favorite of all the feeder birds and it's difficult to keep the feeder filled.

Of the three woodpeckers, downy is the most familiar, and the hairy woodpecker looks almost exactly like it. The downy is six inches long while the hairy is nine inches long. Both species have a white back and white underparts. They have black

wings, and black and white streaked faces. The downy's bill is very short while the hairy's bill is about as long as its head. The male of both species has a red on the nape. I have seen the hairy only a few times here at Baldwin Park.

The red-bellied woodpecker is the prettiest of the woodpeckers that come to my feeders. It has a black and white ladder back, and red on the head – the red on the male covers from its beak and across its head to the back; the female has the red just on the nape.

Woodpeckers feed on wood boring and other insects, also fruit and berries. For nesting, they may excavate a hole in a tree and seldom use a bluebird nest box.

*Yulee Larner
reprinted from Staunton News Leader*

Looking for Shade-Grown Coffee?

Shade-grown coffee farms provide much needed habitat for songbirds—150 species of birds have been identified on shade coffee plantations. Migrating bird populations have been in rapid decline since the introduction of “sun” coffee (grown without shade) and the consequent destruction of rainforest for more coffee plantations.

90% of Equal Exchange coffee is organically grown and the majority of the beans are shade-grown. Some of the coffees that are not, are produced in locales where deforestation had occurred. The land in these areas is being restored with agroforestry systems using coffee as the principal crop.

Equal Exchange Coffee is available at the Roanoke Natural Food Store in Grandin Village and they always have at least one variety on sale.

ROANOKE OR FINCASTLE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT PARTICIPANT CENSUS FORM

Date: _____ Areas Covered: _____

Time: _____ to _____

Temp: _____

Wind: _____

Observers: _____ in _____ Parties Total Party Hours: _____ (_____ on foot _____ by car)

Feeder Observers: _____ Total Party Miles: _____ (_____ on foot _____ by car)

100 Expected Species

- Common Loon
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Horned Grebe
- Great Blue Heron
- Canada Goose
- Wood Duck
- Green-winged Teal
- American Black Duck
- Mallard
- Northern Pintail
- Northern Shoveler
- Gadwall
- American Wigeon
- Canvasback
- Redhead
- Ring-necked Duck
- Lesser Scaup
- Bufflehead
- Hooded Merganser
- Common Merganser
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Ruddy Duck
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Northern Harrier
- Sharp-shinned Hawk
- Cooper's Hawk
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- American Kestrel
- Ruffed Grouse
- Wild Turkey
- Northern Bobwhite
- American Coot
- Killdeer
- Wilson's Snipe
- Ring-billed Gull
- Rock Pigeon
- Mourning Dove
- Barn Owl
- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker

- Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Phoebe
- Horned Lark
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Common Raven
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Carolina Chickadee
- Tufted Titmouse
- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- Brown Creeper
- Carolina Wren
- Winter Wren
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- Eastern Bluebird
- Hermit Thrush
- American Robin
- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher
- American Pipit
- Cedar Waxwing
- Loggerhead Shrike
- European Starling
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Pine Warbler
- Northern Cardinal
- Rufous-sided Towhee
- American Tree Sparrow
- Chipping Sparrow
- Field Sparrow
- Savannah Sparrow
- Fox Sparrow
- Song Sparrow
- Swamp Sparrow
- White-throated Sparrow
- White-crowned Sparrow
- Dark-eyed Junco
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Rusty Blackbird
- Common Grackle
- Brown-headed Cowbird
- Purple Finch
- House Finch
- Pine Siskin
- American Goldfinch
- Evening Grosbeak
- House Sparrow

30 Unusual Species

- Snow Goose
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Great Egret
- Green Heron
- Yellow Crowned Night-Heron
- Tundra Swan
- Greater Scaup
- Long-tailed duck
- Common Goldeneye
- Bald Eagle
- Northern Goshawk
- Rough-legged Hawk
- Golden Eagle
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon
- American Woodcock
- Bonaparte's Gull
- American Herring Gull
- Short-eared Owl
- Fish Crow
- House Wren
- Gray Catbird
- Blue-headed Vireo
- Palm Warbler
- Common Yellowthroat
- Vesper Sparrow
- Baltimore Oriole
- Red Crossbill
- Lincoln's Sparrow
- Selasphorus Hummingbird

Other Species:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Precise, extensive details for these birds should be written on the back of this sheet :

Observers :

- _____
- _____
- _____

