



February 2008 Newsletter

*Celebrating 51 Years
of Birding! 1957-2008*

CONTENTS:

Bill Grant's Outreach Program.....1

Warbler Trail Development.....1

Field Trips.....2

Field Notes.....2

Sightings.....2-3

Christmas Bird Count Tallies.....3-4

Are Evening Grosbeaks Making a Comeback?.....4

Birds of August County, 3rd Edition.....4

Virginia Master Naturalist Program in Bedford/Franklin County.....5

Birdwatchers Flocking to See Rare Bird..... 5

JANUARY MEETING



Dr. Ed Williams presented his highly informative and entertaining video on the 17 known species of penguins.

Dr. Williams has spent years seeking, photographing, and video recording these short-legged, flightless birds (he has seen all species except two, the Humboldt and the African). He trekked seven miles through snow, rain, and hail to video record the rare and endangered Yellow-eyed Penguin that lives on the sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand. He also camped in the extreme Antarctic cold for 12 days observing and recording footage of the Emperor Penguin.

Bill Grant's Outreach Program

Our VP of Programs, Bill Grant, frequently talks to community groups about backyard birding. He has recently expanded his program to include declining bird species. Bill plays their calls, describes their habitats, and explains why these birds are declining.

The ten species declining most rapidly since 1967 as listed by the National Audubon Society are:

- Northern Bobwhite (have been sighted this past summer at the Botetourt Center at Greenfield)
- Evening Grosbeak (Project Feederwatch has received higher than average sightings this year. See article on page 4.)
- Northern Pintail
- Greater Scaup

NEXT MEETING:

**February 11, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

FEBRUARY MEETING

Members' Night

You are invited to bring 5 minutes worth of slides, videos, carvings, photos, photos on CD, etc. of your best bird images. If you plan to participate, please call Bill Grant (389-3294) and let him know what you plan to present and if you will need special equipment. We will have a slide projector, and a TV with VCR, CD and DVD player available. If anyone needs one of the new video projectors let Bill know and we'll try to borrow one since it costs \$200.00 to rent one.

We have many terrific photographers in our club so please share your work.

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

- Boreal Chickadee
- Eastern Meadowlark
- Common Tern
- Loggerhead Shrike
- Field Sparrow
- Grasshopper Sparrow



Habitat preservation, strong conservation provisions in the federal farm bill, support of sustainable forests, and protection of wetlands are needed to prevent bird species from declining. For more information on threatened species and how you can help go to: <http://stateofthebirds.audubon.org/cbid/browseSpecies.php>

Warbler Trail Development

Stephen Living, Watchable Wildlife Biologist of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is working with the Carroll County Tourism Department to develop a Warbler Trail for Carroll, Floyd, and Grayson counties. As part of this effort site-specific species lists will be generated for the following sites:

- Buffalo Mountain Natural Area Preserve
- Rocky Knob Recreation Area
- Crooked Creek Wildlife Management Area
- Blue Ridge Music Center & Fishers Peak
- Devil's Den Nature Preserve
- Grayson Highlands State Park
- Beaver Dam
- Whitetop Mountain
- Beaver Dam Trail



If you have been keeping lists for any of these sites, particularly with detailed info (seasonality, relative abundance etc.) and would like to share them with Stephen please contact him at:

3909 Airline Blvd.
Chesapeake, VA 23321
stephen.living@dgif.virginia.gov
757.465.6868

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

DON'T FORGET TO SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

February 9, Annual Raptor Count on Saturday,

Don't forget to get together with at least one other bird watcher and participate in the Annual Raptor Count on Saturday February 9, 2008. Plan on a leisurely drive around your area, counting all of the different hawks you see. Points are awarded for each hawk, although this is not a serious competition. We compile the results from everyone's efforts and keep an eye on trends in hawk populations. In the event of inclement weather, an alternate date of Sunday February 10 has been set.

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

The tally sheet (which was included in the January RVBC Newsletter) can be emailed to billt3256@att.net or mailed to 3256 Lakewood Forest Rd. Moneta, VA 24121.

February 23, 8:00 AM, New River Valley

Tim and Alyce Quinn (719-0109) will lead us on a trip to look for waterfowl in New River Valley birding hotspots. Bring a lunch and dress in layers as it will likely be colder there than here in Roanoke. We will meet at the Hanging Rock Orange Market near the intersection of Rt. 311 and Rt. 419, north of the 141 exit off I-81.

FIELD NOTES

January, 12, Pond Hopping

Mary Lou Agee led nine birders to Greenfield and Waterfall Lake. They stopped briefly at ponds off Glebe Road but found no activity.

The list of 23 sightings included: Great Blue Heron, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Lesser Scaup, Canvasback, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Canada Goose, Pileated Woodpecker, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Pied-billed Grebe, Mallard, Belted Kingfisher, American Goldfinch, Eastern Bluebird, American Crow, European Starling, American Robin, Blue Jay, Mourning Dove, Northern Mockingbird, Cardinal, and House Sparrow.

January 26, Highland County and Lake Moomaw

Rexanne Bruno of the Lynchburg Bird Club joined our club members on this trip and kindly supplied us with the site list: Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Black Duck, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Loon, and a Ruffed Grouse perched on a branch on the side of the road.

The group also spotted: Pied-billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron, five Bald Eagles, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Golden Eagle, American Kestrel, Ring-billed Gull, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Wren.

SIGHTINGS

January 3, Carole Massart saw a Bald Eagle banking over the Roanoke River at 7:45 AM near Bennington Street.

On January 12, Mike Purdy birded the John's Creek Valley in Craig County (also know as Maggie Valley) and located 34 species. Species sighted: Canada Goose 64;

Great Blue Heron 2; Black Vulture 1; Northern Harrier 2; Red-shouldered Hawk 1; Red-tailed Hawk 3; American Kestrel 1; Mourning Dove 19; Belted Kingfisher 2; Red-bellied Woodpecker 3; Downy Woodpecker 5; Hairy Woodpecker 1; Northern Flicker 1; Blue Jay 3; American Crow 137; Common Raven 3; Carolina Chickadee 3; Black-capped Chickadee 3; Tufted Titmouse 7; White-breasted Nuthatch 4; Carolina Wren 4; Eastern Bluebird 18; American Robin 1; Northern Mockingbird 5; European Starling 20; Cedar Waxwing 5; Yellow-rumped Warbler 7; Field Sparrow 41; Song Sparrow 3; Dark-eyed Junco 51; Northern Cardinal, 7; Purple Finch 1; American Goldfinch 1; House Sparrow 2.

On January 19, in a cold, light rain Eunice and John Hudgins, Elly and Pam Wefel, Bobby and Andy Biggs, Candy Andrzejewski, Connie Marsh, and Carol Siler birded the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands with the excellent birding guidance of David Hughes, the



L to R: John Hudgins, Connie Marsh, Eunice Hudgins, Bobby Biggs, Pam Wefel, Elly Wefel, Andy Biggs, Candy Andrzejewski, and Carol Siler

Field Trip Chairman of the Cape Henry Audubon Society.

The group spotted Red-breasted Loon, Common Loon, hundreds of Northern Gannets, Brown Pelican, Great Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant, Long-tailed Duck, Surf Scoters, Bufflehead, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, Bonaparte's Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull, and Harbor Seals.



During the next three days of chilly weather, the group birded the Eastern Shore and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Highlights

included: Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Harlequin Duck, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, American Black Duck, American Wigeon, Common Merganser, Ruddy Duck, five Bald Eagles, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk,

American Kestrel, Pied-billed Grebe, Lesser Yellowlegs, Northern Flicker, Seaside Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and hundreds of Tree Swallows.

Christmas Bird Count Tallies

Roanoke Christmas Bird Count Results December 15, 2007

** denotes rare species*

Common Loon 2; Pied-billed Grebe 7; Horned Grebe 1; Great Blue Heron 18; Canada Goose 318; Unidentified Swan 2*; Wood Duck 1; Green-winged Teal 22; Mallard 282; Gadwall 48; Ring-necked Duck 20; Hooded Merganser 24; Red-breasted Merganser 3*; Black Vulture 98; Turkey Vulture 167; Bald Eagle 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk 5; Cooper's Hawk 4; Northern Goshawk 1*; Red-shouldered Hawk 1; Red-tailed Hawk 1; American Kestrel 2; Merlin 1*; Wild Turkey 5; American Coot 1; Killdeer 7; Bonaparte's Gull 6*; Ring-billed Gull 221; Rock Pigeon 864; Mourning Dove 385; Eastern Screech Owl 5; Great Horned Owl 2; Belted Kingfisher 13; Red-bellied Woodpecker 27; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 14; Downy Woodpecker 38; Hairy Woodpecker 5; Northern Flicker 8; Pileated Woodpecker 7; Eastern Phoebe 2; Blue Jay 83; American Crow 320; Fish Crow 4*; Common Raven 6; Black-capped Chickadee 11; Carolina Chickadee 99; Tufted Titmouse 107; Red-breasted Nuthatch 7; White-breasted Nuthatch 46; Brown Creeper 5; Carolina Wren 74; Winter Wren 4; Golden-crowned Kinglet 24; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 7; Eastern Bluebird 75; Hermit Thrush 1; American Robin 250; Northern Mockingbird 32; Cedar Waxwing 75; European Starling 1604; Yellow-rumped Warbler 12; Northern Cardinal 169; Eastern Towhee 7; Chipping Sparrow 1; Field Sparrow 6; Fox Sparrow 1; Song Sparrow 85; Swamp Sparrow 1; White-throated Sparrow 82; Dark-eyed Junco 166; Red-winged Blackbird 1; House Finch 70; American Goldfinch 105; House Sparrow 67

Fincastle Christmas Bird Count December 16, 2007

74 species were sighted by 25 observers in 14 parties on 30°- 45° F day with winds NW at 10-20 mph.

Pied-billed Grebe 1; Great Blue Heron 10; Canada Goose 479; Wood Duck 1; Green-winged Teal 25; Mallard 60; Canvasback 1; Redhead 2; Ring-necked Duck 12; Bufflehead 1; Hooded Merganser 39; Ruddy Duck 1; Black Vulture 158; Turkey Vulture 318; Northern Harrier 2; Sharp-shinned Hawk 4; Cooper's Hawk 4; Red-shouldered Hawk 3; Red-tailed Hawk 4; American

Kestrel 16; Wild Turkey 81; Common Snipe 2; Ring-billed Gull 21; Rock Dove 215; Mourning Dove 418; Eastern Screech Owl 2; Great Horned Owl 1; Belted Kingfisher 13; Red-bellied Woodpecker 23; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 10; Downy Woodpecker 38; Hairy Woodpecker 3; Northern Flicker 36; Pileated Woodpecker 14; Eastern Phoebe 4; Blue Jay 301; American Crow 1041; Common Raven 1; Black-capped Chickadee 24; Carolina Chickadee 105; Tufted Titmouse 87; Red-breasted Nuthatch 39; Carolina Wren 46; Winter Wren 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet 7; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 3; Eastern Bluebird 205; Hermit Thrush 3; American Robin 172; Northern Mockingbird 89; Cedar Waxwing 19; European Starling 907; Yellow-rumped Warbler 46; Pine Warbler 4; Northern Cardinal 213; Eastern Towhee 26; Chipping Sparrow 3; Field Sparrow 23; Fox Sparrow 11; Song Sparrow 73; Swamp Sparrow 3; White-throated Sparrow 256; White-crowned Sparrow 86; Dark-eyed Junco 220; Eastern Meadowlark 5; Purple Finch 72; House Finch 95; Pine Siskin 12; American Goldfinch 134; and House Sparrow 12.

Peaks of Otter Christmas Bird Count

A total of 44 species sighted by 17 observers in 6 parties. Temp: 25°-35° F. A mostly clear day with 2 mph winds from the NW. All water open on Abbot Lake.

Ruffed Grouse 3; Wild Turkey 1; Pied-billed Grebe 3; Black Vulture 2; Turkey Vulture 7; Red-tailed Hawk 10; Mourning Dove 1; Eastern Screech Owl 2; Belted Kingfisher 2; Red-bellied Woodpecker 28; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 18; Downy Woodpecker 33; Hairy Woodpecker 8; Northern Flicker 12; Pileated Woodpecker 25; Eastern Phoebe 3; Blue Jay 27; American Crow 66; Common Raven 9; Carolina Chickadee 52; Black-capped Chickadee 5; chickadee species 3; Tufted Titmouse 65; Red-breasted Nuthatch 33; White-breasted Nuthatch 66; Brown Creeper 2; Carolina Wren 36; Winter Wren 1; Golden-crowned Kinglet 37; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 37; Eastern Bluebird 6; Hermit Thrush 12; American Robin 111; Northern Mockingbird 5; European Starling 130; Cedar Waxwing 14; Yellow-rumped Warbler 12; Field Sparrow 3; Song Sparrow 22; White-throated Sparrow 34; Dark-eyed Junco 459; Northern Cardinal 23; Purple Finch 12; American Goldfinch 40; and an unusual species: Golden Eagle 1.

Are Evening Grosbeaks Making a Comeback?

In the fall of 2006, The Cornell Lab of Ornithology reported that Evening Grosbeak populations had declined dramatically over the history of the FeederWatch Project. 20-year participants lamented the recent lack of Evening Grosbeaks recalling that the species was abundant when they started FeederWatching.

Although Project FeederWatch does not expect to see the numbers of 20 years ago, this season may bring greater numbers of Evening Grosbeaks to feeders.

While it is too early to draw valid conclusions, a higher percentage of participants in the northeast are reporting grosbeaks than last year. For example, 15% of sites reported Evening Grosbeaks in New Hampshire for the first month of this season. For the same period last season, only 1% or less reported these grosbeaks. Similarly at least 10% of sites in Vermont reported grosbeaks over the same period this year compared to no sites last year. Ontario and Quebec also have seen increases.

A new participant in Summit, New York, remembered feeding hundreds of Evening Grosbeaks in the 1980s when he lived in Saranac Lake, New York. Then he moved to Summit and had only seen small flocks of 6 to 10 pass through in the fall. That was until this year. On November 27, 2007, he wrote, "Two weeks ago, six evening grosbeaks appeared on my shelf feeder. One week ago, I counted 50, and this morning I counted 100.... I just wanted to let you know, before I go back to the store for more seeds, that in Summit, New York, the Evening Grosbeaks are back with a vengeance."



from Cornell Lab of Ornithology Project FeederWatch

Birds of Augusta County, Third Edition

In 1988, Augusta Bird Club published the first edition of *Birds of Augusta County*. The second edition followed ten years later in 1998. Now, members of Augusta Bird Club are pleased to announce the publication of the third edition of *Birds of Augusta County* edited by YuLee Lerner. The book provides detailed and comprehensive information on the occurrence, status, and breeding of 307 species, of which twenty-eight have been observed only one time. In addition, there are chapters on prime birding locations, history of birding in Augusta County since 1966, and description of the topography and geology of the county. Eighty-two observers contributed one or more of the 898 new records that "broke the book" and which are included in this third edition.

To order by mail, make your check for \$17.00 payable to "Augusta Bird Club Book Account" and mail to YuLee Lerner, 21 Woodlee Rd. Apt. 114, Staunton, VA 24401.

YuLee Lerner

Virginia Master Naturalist Program in Bedford/Franklin County

In the Fall of 2006, several nature enthusiasts responded to a request from the state-operated Virginia Master Naturalist Program (VMNP) to establish a new chapter in the Bedford/Franklin County area. The primary objective of the VMNP is to train volunteers to provide education, outreach and service to benefit management of natural resources within their communities. Support comes from five State agencies – Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Cooperative Extension/Virginia Tech, Virginia Museum of Natural History, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Virginia Department of Forestry. Ten original chapters of VMNP had been formed in 2005/6 and were already operating. A VMNP goal was to add 10 new chapters in 2007.

The Local Coordinating Committee had soon established interest from individuals covering an area that included all of Franklin County and parts of Bedford, Pittsylvania and Patrick counties. This included Smith Mountain Lake and Philpott Lake as well as two State Parks—Smith Mountain Lake and Fairy Stone.

The new chapter moved into Phase 2 and was now called the Blue Ridge Foothills and Lakes (BRFAL) Chapter of the VMNP. Eventually faculty were lined up and a course curriculum emerged that covered many topics such as: ecology, botany, mycology, biogeography of Virginia, herpetology, entomology, ornithology, dendrology, astronomy, ichthyology, mammalogy, natural resource management, interpretive skills, citizen science and volunteer opportunities.

To complete the requirement of 40 hours of basic training, nineteen eager students attended a two-hour class once a week from August 2nd to October 12th plus participated in field activities six Saturdays over that time. Besides myself, other RVBC members that took the course included Tim Quinn and Marshall Daniels. Bill Hunley taught the Ornithology session. A combination graduation and bird netting party was held November 3rd. This group is now completing 40 hours of service projects and 8 hours of advanced training each during the coming year.

Since graduation, BRFAL has elected officers, established sub-committees, begun volunteering for various projects and is planning the next training schedule. Some projects that graduates have/are participating in include: The Ferrum Nature Society Bird Count, Virginia Save Our Streams monitoring, Water Wizard Van (sponsored by the Bedford County Soil & Water Conservation District as well as the Bedford County 4-H), an After School Science project available at Boones Mill Elementary, a project to create an outdoor classroom at the 4-H center at Smith Mountain Lake, Native plant buffer garden maintenance at either

SML State Park or Skelton 4-H Center, an educational outreach project to teach children about natural habitats via the Franklin County Reading Sprouts Program in Rocky Mount and various activities associated with Booker T. Washington National Monument, Smith Mountain Lake Association, and the five state sponsors.

It was fun to participate in the planning stages of this new venture and also to attend the course sessions. I learned some interesting information and now have a valuable list of resources to address animal and plant identification as well as more general knowledge of Virginia's natural resources. I met a number of like-minded people and established contacts for various fields related to understanding local natural history. I have enjoyed participating in some of the available projects and look forward to more. If you are interested in participating in the next class and want to have information about scheduling, please contact BRFAL by email: brfal.vnmp@earthlink.net, by phone: 540-365-4613 or go to our website (soon to change and improve) <http://home.earthlink.net/~brfal.vnmp/>. The state program information can be accessed at: <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/>.

Carl Boast

Birdwatchers Flocking To See Rare Bird

On December 23, 2007, Augusta Bird Club member, Linda Matkins, received a phone call from a friend in Verona who described what she believed was a rare bird coming to her feeders. Linda relayed the news to other club members, who went to check the bird, and all agreed that this is indeed, a painted bunting, the most colorful North American songbird.

The painted bunting has a purplish blue head, green back, red rump, and is completely red underneath. First seen on December 10, 2007, it was still present January 6, 2008. Augusta County has only one previous record – one on Barterbrook Road, April 15 – 21, 1993.

In summer, painted buntings live along the coast from North Carolina to Florida; they are rare winter and spring visitors in Virginia's coastal region. There have been only five records from Piedmont, and five from Mountains and Valleys region.

Thanks to Chris Waldrop, the gracious "hostess" who has welcomed more than 178 birders from around the state, including five from Honduras who were visiting the area. Thirty-eight birders came last Sunday. The beautiful painted bunting visits the feeders every day and seems to be in no hurry to leave!

YuLee Larner

Reprinted from the Staunton News Leader



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB 2008 OFFICERS

President: Elly Wefel 977-0636
VP (Programs) Bill Grant 389-3294
VP (Membership): Eleanor Dye 890-1627
Treasurer: Eunice Hudgins 389-4056
Secretary: Connie Marsh 334-7094
Field Trips: Beth Griffin 265-4853
Directors at Large: Alyce Quinn and Bob Miller
Publications: Carol Siler 725-1609
Website: <http://roanokebird.tripod.com>

2008 Membership Dues

Name(s):

Address:

City:

ST:

Zip:

Phone:

Email:

Mail To: Roanoke Valley Bird Club
c/o Eunice Hudgins, Treasurer
870 Stonegate Court, Salem VA 24153-6810

Dues

Individual **\$12** _____

Family **\$20** _____

Student **\$7** _____

Sustaining **\$30** _____

Adopt-a-BlueBird **\$15** _____

Additional
Contribution **\$** _____

Total Submitted **\$** _____