



October 2007 Newsletter

*Celebrating 50 Years
of Birding! 1957-2007*

INSIDE:

**Annual Seed Sale
Fund Raiser
Order Form**

**Fund Raiser
Raffle: Framed
Audubon
Prints.....2**

Field Trips.....2

Field Notes.....2

Sightings.....2

*Bird Watchers Look
for Changes in
Climate.....3*

*On Birds And
Nature
Seventy Days and
Nights.....3*

SEPTEMBER MEETING

In tune with the hawkwatching season at Harveys Knob, we watched The Discovery Channel's video, *The Ultimate Guide To Birds Of Prey* which focused on the specially adapted senses of raptors.



A few highlights:
Because an owl's ears are asymmetrically placed, it can pinpoint sounds very accurately. In total darkness, an owl can pounce almost precisely on a scurrying mouse. Kestrels can detect ultraviolet light, which allows them to spot the ultraviolet-reflecting urine trails of voles, a favored prey. Vultures, with their large olfactory nerves, can smell carrion from miles away; and the streamlined physique of the Peregrine Falcon, the fastest predator on the planet, enable them to dive for prey at speeds up to 217 miles an hour.

NEXT MEETING:
October 8, 7:00 p.m.
**Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

OCTOBER MEETING

October's program will be presented by Sandra Breil from Farmville, Virginia, a volunteer for Earthwatch who spoke to us several years ago.



Recently retired, Sandra now has time for the bird projects she has been interested in for many years. She's worked with hummingbirds in Peru, forest birds in Tanzania, and Kagaroo Island birds in Australia. She has gathered her experiences in her program titled, *Volunteering on Bird Projects All Over the World*.

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

Receive Your Newsletter Via E-mail (Help us cut costs!)

Many club members have requested that the newsletter be sent to them electronically only. We greatly appreciate their willingness to accept electronic delivery.

If you wish to receive the newsletter electronically, and not receive a hard copy, and have *not yet requested an electronic copy only*, please e-mail your request to Carol Siler at cesiler@yahoo.com. (If you prefer to continue to receive a copy via USPS, we will continue to send you one.)

Reminder: 2008 Annual Dues

If you haven't already done so, please renew your membership and complete the form on the back of the newsletter, and send it and your check to our Treasurer, Eunice Hudgins.

Fund Raiser Raffle: Framed Audubon Prints

Connie Marsh has donated two beautiful, framed prints published by the National Park Service that the club will raffle off. Tickets may be purchased at the October Club meeting.

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

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

October 13, 8:00 AM, Searching for Sparrows

Meet leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) near the Bojangles at Botetourt Commons. He will lead us in search of sparrows at various locations in Botetourt County. This may be a good opportunity to spot a Lincoln's Sparrow.

October 14, All day, The Big Sit!

Note that this is a Sunday event. The Big Sit! will be held at Tim and Alyce Quinn's (719-0109). This is an all day stationary birdwatching event beginning at one minute past midnight on October 14 and extending for 24 hours. The event was detailed in the September newsletter.

This year we will use the event as a fund raiser for the club. At the October meeting we will collect pledges for each species the team tallies during the event. If you can't make the meeting you may call Elly Wefel at 977-0636 to make a pledge.

A light breakfast will be available (bagels, fruit, juice, coffee, etc.) at 7:00 and we'll eat lunch around noon. Feel free to bring a dish to share. You might want to bring a lawn chair.

FIELD NOTES

September 8 Trip to Peaks of Otter

Accompanied by twittering Chimney Swifts overhead, four club members braved the gorgeous early morning weather with leader Bill Hunley and his daughter at the Peaks of Otter. The group noted: American Redstart, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Scarlet Tanager, Kingfisher, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Towhee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Song

Sparrow, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, Indigo Bunting, Catbird, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, White-eyed Vireo, Carolina Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Goldfinch, Tennessee Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, Blackburnian Warbler, Parula, Yellow Warbler, And Cape May Warbler.



After the walk, Bill Hunley and his daughter Rachel saw a large Coyote on the Blue Ridge Parkway near milepost 88 between the Peaks and Powell Gap.

September 21 Trip to Harveys Knob

On a pleasant 72° morning four intrepid club members birdwatched along the road from Harveys Knob to Bobletts Gap Overlook. They spotted Tennessee Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Pine Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, American Redstart, Carolina Wren, American Goldfinch, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Blue Jay, Eastern Towhee, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Downy Woodpecker, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Black Vulture, Common Raven, Broad-winged Hawk, Osprey, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Northern Cardinal.

SIGHTINGS

Mike Purdy and others at Harveys Knob hawkwatch observed a sub-adult Mississippi Kite on Sept. 7. This is only the second fall record sighting in over 30 years of hawkwatching at this site. There is also one spring record from this location.

Alyce Quinn spotted a leucistic Red-tailed Hawk sitting on a power line on the east side of Rt. 220 just south of the road that leads to Boones Mill Elementary School. Alyce did not see its tail or back, but the belly band was unmistakable, and its front and head were white. (Leucism (*loo-kism*) is a condition characterized by reduced pigmentation. Unlike albinism it is caused by a reduction in all types of skin pigment, not just melanin.)

Eunice & John Hudgins observed the following birds in their son's Colorado Springs backyard in late September: Lesser Goldfinch; Black-billed Magpie; Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds; Mountain Chickadee; Spotted Towhee; Cassin's Finch; Steller's, Pinion and Blue Jay; Mountain Bluebird; and Bushtit.

SEEDS FOR A SONG

November 3, 2007

Roanoke Valley Bird Club Fund Raiser In Cooperation with Northwest True Value Hardware

We are having a seed sale to benefit both you and the community. By placing an order with us, you will get quality seed containing little or no waste, harvested this year, at reasonable prices. Proceeds from the sale will be used for community projects. The sale is open to the public, so please copy this form and distribute it to friends and neighbors. There will be a small supply of extra seed available the day of the sale for those unable to pre-order. Refreshments will be served, and experienced bird watchers/feeders will be on hand the day of pick-up to answer any questions.

Orders must be received by Wednesday, October 12 and picked up on Saturday, November 3, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m., at:

**Northwest True Value Hardware (in the Hollins area)
7650 Williamson Road, Roanoke VA 24019
(540)-362-2112**

The store is about a half mile south of the entrance to Hollins College.

Please note this is a new location.

If you are unable to pick up your seed on November 3, please make arrangements for someone else to pick it up for you.

It's easy to order:

1. Complete the enclosed order form, being sure to include your name, phone number, and address along with your seed selections.
2. Calculate the total, which **already includes** Virginia sales tax.
3. Mail your completed form and check, payable to Roanoke Valley Bird Club, **in time for it to be received by October 12**, to: Eunice Hudgins, 870 Stonegate Ct., Salem, VA 24153.

Seed Descriptions

Wild birdseed mixes attract ground-feeding birds such as mourning doves, juncos and sparrows:

- *Gourmet Mix*: contains millet, sunflower, safflower and thistle.
- *Shell Free Mix*: a waste-free mix of millet, sunflower chips, cracked corn, canary seed and peanut hearts.

Sunflower seed is the best all-around food, favored by a wide variety of birds:

- *Black Oil Sunflower*: smaller than the striped, with thinner shell, more kernel and higher oil content; preferred 2:1 over other seed by most feeder birds.
- *Sunflower Chips*: the heart of the seed, virtually no hull, no mess, and more meat per pound.
- *Striped Sunflower*: many common feeder birds, such as cardinals, jays, grosbeaks, titmice, chickadees, sparrows and finches, as well as squirrels, like this larger, thicker shelled seed.

Specialty seeds:

- *Nyjer (Thistle)*: especially good for goldfinches and pine siskins, this seed is rich in nourishing oil.
- *White Millet*: favored by ground feeding birds such as juncos, towhees, buntings and sparrows.
- *Safflower*: squirrels don't care for it, but many birds such as cardinals, grosbeaks and juncos do.
- *Peanuts*: a favorite of woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, nuthatches and blue jays.

Suet cakes: High-energy food, loaded with necessary fat, especially good in winter. Attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, wrens and nuthatches.

Ear Corn: Offering ear corn to squirrels helps keep them busy and away from bird feeders.

SEEDS FOR A SONG

November 3, 2007

Roanoke Valley Bird Club Fund Raiser

In Cooperation with Northwest True Value Hardware

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

If you are not a club member, how did you learn about this sale?

Description	Quantity	Size	Price/Each (includes tax)	Total
Gourmet Mix		40 lb.	\$14.65	
		20 lb.	7.60	
		4 lb.	1.75	
*Shell Free Mix		25 lb.	10.90	
Black Oil Sunflower		50 lb.	22.45	
		25 lb.	11.75	
		10 lb.	5.70	
Sunflower Chips		50 lb.	45.00	
		25 lb.	22.30	
Striped Sunflower		50 lb.	20.80	
Nyjer (Thistle)		50 lb.	53.40	
		20 lb.	22.85	
		10 lb.	11.95	
Millet		50 lb.	13.50	
		25 lb.	7.55	
Peanuts in Shell		25 lb.	25.15	
Safflower		50 lb.	29.40	
		25 lb.	15.45	
		4 lb.	3.80	
High Energy Suet		Cake	1.20	
Ear Corn		6 1/2 lb.	5.60	
			Total	\$

*There may be a problem getting this seed on time because the supplier does not keep a lot on hand—it spoils quickly. If you order it, be aware that you may have to make a second trip to pick it up later.

Bird Watchers Look for Changes Linked to Climate

If you feed birds, scientists need your help

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch is seeking your help. They request that you count the birds at your feeders each week and send the information to the Lab of Ornithology. The data will be used to help document unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges of bird species over time. To see the effects of global climate change, scientists say they need new and veteran participants alike to keep counting birds now and into the future.



“Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same time helps generate the world’s largest database on feeder-bird populations,” says project leader David Bonter. “Since we started in 1987, nearly 40,000 people have submitted observations, adding up to over 1.5 million checklists.”

Some of the most dramatic changes revealed by data collected during two decades of Project FeederWatch may be related to changes in climate. “We’re seeing hummingbirds turning up much farther north than usual during the winter,” says Bonter. “Warblers and other insect-eaters are also lingering longer into the northern winter, possibly because of warmer temperatures. Bird count data gathered in the coming years will help us focus on these trends and what might be causing them.”

Recent mild winter conditions may be contributing to the northward range movements of several nonmigratory species. The Carolina Wren, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Cardinal, and Tufted Titmouse have all expanded their ranges several hundred miles to the north in recent decades. Some migratory hawks are also remaining farther north in winter. Reports of Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks have increased across the northern tier of the continent in recent years.

Project FeederWatch data also show drastic declines in Evening Grosbeaks across the continent. While grosbeak populations are declining, other species are booming. FeederWatchers in the southeastern United States reported record high numbers of Yellow-rumped and Pine Warblers. Reports of woodpeckers of all kinds are increasing across the northeastern quadrant of the continent. Northern Flickers and Anna’s Hummingbirds are climbing up the list of the top 25 most-reported birds in the Pacific Northwest. Twenty years ago they didn’t make the list at all.

The 21st season of Project FeederWatch gets underway November 10 and runs through April 4. All ages and

skill levels are welcome. To learn more about Project FeederWatch or to register, visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher’s Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights.

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ON BIRDS AND NATURE

Seventy Days and Nights

Traveling alone, bearing 35° nights in the Colorado mountains to 110° in the Wyoming plains, Mary Lou Agee spent 70 days tent camping from June to August. The seventy-seven year old motored 40-200 miles a day, touching ground in most of the western states. She passed through wildlife refuges and parks including Glacier, Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone, following the traces of Lewis and Clark and the wagon wheel paths of the Chisholm, Santa Fe, and Oregon Trails. She saw Mule Deer, Elk, Mountain Goats, Sheep, Black Bear, a Grizzly Bear with cubs, Picas, Yellow-bellied Marmot, and American Bison.



She spotted the Burrowing Owl on the plains of Wyoming; the White-tailed Ptarmigan in Rocky Mountain National Park; the Three-toed Woodpecker in New Mexico; and the Flammulated Owl in New Mexico in Water Canyon, Magdalena, west of Socorro. She saw 400 bird species. (Most not for the first time. Her current life list of North American birds is 689; she is aiming for at least 700.) Along the rocky coast of Oregon she noted Elegant Tern, Rock Sandpiper, Black Oystercatchers, Pink-footed Shearwater, and White Pelican.

Camping only in areas with night security, she introduced herself to nearby campers, letting them know she was alone. If an emergency arose, she would, with a touch of a button, set off a very loud siren.

Taking advantage of local harvests, Mary Lou bought fresh greens and tomatoes, Flathead cherries in Wyoming, Bing cherries in Washington, blueberries, and Marion berries in Oregon, keeping perishables in a portable fridge that plugged into the car’s lighter.

This winter Mary Lou will camp in the Everglades. Within the next year, she plans to travel to Monterey, California, for pelagic trips with Debra Shearwater. And possibly take a trip to the Denver area in April, and maybe a trip to Duluth, Minnesota sometime in the winter for owls...

