



# September 2008 Newsletter

*Celebrating 51 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2008*

## ***NEXT MEETING:***

**September 8, 7:00 p.m.  
Grandin Court Baptist  
Church**

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## **MAY MEETING**

Sam and Liz Williams shared slides of the birds and wildlife on their trip to the western U.S.

## **SEPTEMBER MEETING**

New York City Audubon has issued a DVD of the Nature Series Program about a Red-tailed Hawk that made New York City his home.

This hawk's arrival in Manhattan in 1991 made history. Dubbed Pale Male, he made

an exclusive Fifth Avenue apartment building his home and became an instant celebrity. Joanne Woodward narrates this award-winning presentation. Follow the progress of this exquisite buteo, as he hunts Central Park, courts his mate on Woody Allen's balcony, builds a penthouse nest, protects his family from attacking crows, and encourages his chicks to fly.

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

## **RVBC Annual Seed Sale Fund Raiser November 1**

### **Quality Bird Seed at Reasonable Prices!**

*This is the Club's major annual fund raiser and we would 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 at least a small bag.*

**The Seed Sale will take place on November 1 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Northwest True Value Hardware Company near Hollins on Route 11.** The store is about 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. Orders must be received by October 11.*

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.

## **2009 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 our Treasurer, Eunice Hudgins.

## **Harvey's Knob Hawkwatch Begins Sept. 1**

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For more information contact Bill James: 563-9248; Baron Gibson: 268-5958; or Joyce Holt: 384-6674.

## **Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2009 Calendar Submissions due Sept. 1**

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Please submit photos or artwork for our 2009 calendar by September 1 to Carl Boast: 3368 Hickory Cove Lane, Moneta, VA 24121. Or give submissions directly to Carl any time you might see him before Sept. 1.

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 provide your name on an accompanying sheet however. A committee will select the images for the calendar from the submissions. Submitted materials will be returned. To contact Carl: [carlandlinda@earthlink.net](mailto:carlandlinda@earthlink.net) or phone: 540-297-7336.

## **For The Love Of Nature and Wildlife**

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The Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council and The League of Roanoke Artists sponsored the *For the Love of Nature and Wildlife* art show. Connie Marsh, our Treasurer, judged the show and the RVBC awarded the talented winner, Maggie Kuebler, a pair of binoculars. Maggie is a budding birdwatcher and was thrilled to receive the prize.



## **Conservation Easement at Carvins Cove**

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On April 21, the Roanoke City Council granted a conservation easement to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Western Virginia Land Trust of 6,185 acres at the Carvins Cove Natural Reserve. The City Council's action has created the largest conservation

easement in the state, and is a first step to accomplishing the Council's goal of placing all of the 12,000 acres at Carvins Cove (the second largest municipal park in the nation) under easement. This is an important and laudable step in not only protecting the water supply, but also increasing much needed wildlife habitat.

## **Birding Access to WPCP**

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The Water Pollution Control Plant in Roanoke is a principal stopover site in southwestern Virginia for migrating birds.

Scott Shirley, Director of Wastewater Operations for the Western Virginia Water Authority met with Alyce Quinn and Rupert Cutler in July to discuss improving access to the site. Parking permits and established parking areas were discussed, along with private grants to help fund the construction of bird-watching platforms, boardwalks, guard rails, and informational signs/kiosks.

## **THE BIG SIT! Sunday, October 12**

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This 24-hour stationary bird watching adventure has been referred to as a tailgate party for birders. It works like this: You sit inside a 17-foot diameter circle and count all the bird species you see or hear within a 24-hour period. That's it!

This year we will use the event as a club fund raiser. At the September meeting we will collect pledges for each species the team tallies during the event. (If you can't make the meeting please call Eunice Hudgins at 389-4056 to make a pledge.) For example, if 20 club members pledged \$0.20 per species and the team tallies 50 species during The Big Sit!, the team could generate \$200.

Join us at Tim and Alyce Quinn's (719-0109, call for directions) house in Burnt Chimney for this year's event. (*Arrive early to see the most birds.*) We'll have two circles set up to optimize our sightings. 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 if you have one.

The count will go on for the 24-hour period starting at one minute after midnight the morning of October 12, and going till midnight that night, so come whenever you want, and stay as long as you want. If you plan to arrive before 7:00 a.m., though, please let them know so they can tell you where the circles are, 'cause the Quinns sure won't be out yet!

If you get tired of sitting, you can take a walk on one of their trails through the woods. Fish in their pond (bring your own equipment) or play pool or darts in their basement. Come join the fun! We can use all the eyes and ears we can get.

## FIELD TRIPS

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**CHAIRMAN**            **BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853**

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

### **September 13, 8:00 a.m. Harvey's Knob**

*(milemarker 95.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway)*

*For information call Beth Griffin: 265-4853*

We will meet at Harvey's Knob. We have no assigned leader for this trip. Pooling our identification skills, we will search for migratory songbirds along the parkway. Expect to walk 1-2 miles and then car shuttle back up to Harvey's Knob to meet with expert hawk watchers. If you plan to stay and hawk watch, bring drinks, lunch, and a chair.

### **September 27, 8:00 a.m. Peaks of Otter**

Meet Leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) at the Peaks of Otter Lodge (not the Visitors Center). We will walk around the lake looking for neo-tropical migrants, particularly warblers. After the walk, please join us for breakfast at the Peaks of Otter Lodge.

## FIELD NOTES

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### **Booker T. Washington National Monument, May 10**

The group noted 47 species, mostly heard, seldom seen! Leaves were in full bloom, thus hiding the little critters from view. Heard Acadian Flycatchers and Louisiana Waterthrush—nesters within the park—and spotted Red-tailed and Sharp-shinned Hawks overhead.

### **Chincoteague Trip, May 15-17**

Carl and Linda Boast, Anne Hanna, Beth Griffin, and Candy Andrzejewski saw a total of 76 species. At the Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge they were thrilled to see a pair of Blue Grosbeaks sitting in the sun showing off their colors. Other highlights were Cliff Swallows, Bald Eagles, Osprey, Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and a Snapping Turtle laying eggs in a hole next to one of the trails.

At the CBT, they saw Brown Pelican, Least Tern, and Purple Sandpiper; and expert birders from Ohio identified first and second-year Northern Gannets for the group.

At the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge the birders met up with Mike Iwanik from the Charlottesville Bird Club, some of the Wow! birds were: Forster's, Least and Royal Terns; Short-billed Dowitcher; American Oystercatcher; Dunlin; Marbled Godwit; Whimbrel; and Willet. We also heard Clapper Rails and Northern Bobwhite.

### **Trip to Whitetop Mountain, July 12**

Thirteen club members led by Alyce and Tim Quinn birded Whitetop Mountain in Grayson County. Most of the group stayed overnight in Abingdon before heading to the mountain. Birding from Abingdon to the mountaintop yielded Purple Martin, Blue Heron, Black-capped Chickadee, Vesper Sparrow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Cedar Waxwing, Song Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Goldfinch, Common Raven, Red-eyed Vireo, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Veery, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Dark-eyed Junco, Red-tailed Hawk, Blue-headed Vireo, Common Yellow-throat, Red Breasted Nuthatch, Canadian Geese, Red-winged Blackbird, Barn Swallow, House Wren, European Starling, Northern Cardinal, Eastern Phoebe, Gray Catbird, Chimney Swift, Red-breasted Grosbeak, Least Flycatcher, Eastern Meadowlark, Carolina Wren, and Eastern Bluebird. Upon leaving the Abingdon area, Norris and Janie Ford saw a Black Bear feeding beneath an apple tree. Several in the group stopped at Rural Retreat and spotted Yellow-throated Vireo, Green Heron, Great Egret, Cedar Waxwing, Great-crested Flycatcher, Killdeer, Song Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Bluebird, Rough-winged Swallow, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Kingbird. An American Kestrel was spotted along the highway on the return home.

### **The Austin's Open House, August 2**



The group enjoyed great food and wonderful company at the annual open house. Birding highlights included Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, American Redstart, and Hooded Warbler.

## SIGHTINGS

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On June 6, Fenton Day, Mike Donahue, and Mike Purdy birded Craig, Giles and Montgomery counties. While



driving along Rt. 621 in Montgomery County, Fenton spotted a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. They observed the bird for about a half hour as it sallied out for insects and returned to perch on the fence.

On June 15, Rupert Cutler spotted Yellow-crowned Night Heron (in the creek near the Valley View Mall) and Rough-winged Swallows (behind Barrows Office Furniture) which brings Rupert's Lick Run species total to 75.

On June 18, Zach Thompson birded Bedford County including City Lake, Claytor Nature Study Center, &

Falling Creek Park. Highlight of the trip was two Loggerhead Shrikes.

On June 20 in the evening Zach Thompson heard 2 Whip-poor-wills & a Barred Owl on Mountain Pass Road just north of the Parkway.

On July 2, Joyce and David Holt drove by the nest site of a Yellow-crowned Night Heron on Shank Street in Salem at noon. They spotted one young heron standing on the branch that contains the nest, and preening. No other birds were observed.

Zach Thompson birded Greenfield Lake on July 26 & 27 and spotted Pied-billed Grebe and a presumed Willow Flycatcher. Also heard a Northern Bobwhite and saw a Wood Duck.

On July 19, Zach Thompson birded northern Botetourt County including the Fincastle, Kyles Mills, and Owens areas; Gala Wetland; & Garden Mtn. Rd. The highlight was 4 Great Egrets at the wetland. Also saw a juvenile Great Blue Heron at the wetland.

On August 13, Zach Thompson saw a Bald Eagle early afternoon near the Hollins exit off I-81.

## ***BIG SPRING DAY AT THE PEAKS OF OTTER – MAY 3, 2008***

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Another beautiful count day, clear and warm but a little windy at the higher elevations. We found 116 species for the day, in spite of the near absence of migrants.

Perhaps the best birds of the day were the Bald Eagles, an adult seen by Carol Siler near Harvey's Knob on her way to join her party, and an immature (probably second year) bird found by Joyce Holt's group at Harvey's Knob. There was only one previous record for this species, a bird seen in 2001, also at Harvey's Knob.

There were no other new high counts, but the Worm-eating Warbler total tied the previous high, and there were also very high counts for Red-tailed Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Blue-headed Vireo—all the more remarkable on a day when many of the species counts were below average.

Species we expected to see but did not: American Kestrel, seen on 32 of the 37 previous counts, Bank Swallow 19/37, Blue-winged Warbler 33/37, Magnolia Warbler 27/37, Cape May Warbler 30/37, Blackburnian Warbler 32/37, Northern Waterthrush, 27/37 Savannah Sparrow 21/37, Swamp Sparrow 23/37, and White-crowned Sparrow 29/37. I was also surprised we did not get a few Red-breasted Nuthatches after such a banner winter season—they were still coming to our feeder on April 30.

The Northern Bobwhite continues to be on the critical list, with only one bird reported. There were nineteen

other species which were reported by only one party—nine of these by Gene Sattler's group. A special thanks to them and to Rexanne Bruno (who could not go this year) for all their work scouting the territory. They would have had more, but couldn't find the Great Egret, Lesser Yellowlegs or White-crowned Sparrow they found during count week.

Segments of the count area were covered by the following

- A1. *Flat Top Overlook to Floyds Field—Carole Massart, Deborah Ingram*
- A2. *Fallingwater Cascades—Liz Williams, Linda Barker, Carol Siler*
- B. *Buchanan—Alyce Quinn, Connie Marsh, Beth Griffin, Ann Allen*
- C. *Sheep Creek Road—Mark Johnson, Susan Stanton, Jo Wood, Glennys Sheppard,*
- D. *Parkers Gap (Warbler) Road—Thelma & John Dalmas, Randy & Sue Thrasher*
- E. *Jennings/North/Middle/McFalls Creeks—Mike Purdy, Jim Ayers, Zach Thompson*
- F. *Bedford Lake, Wheats Valley, Stoney/Overstreet Creeks—Melva & Charles Hansrote, RuthAnn & Dick Miller*
- G. *Goose Creek Valley—Peggy Opengari, Mary Ratliff, Sissy Logan, Janie & Norris Ford, Susan Kidd*
- H. *Thaxton, Penicks Mill—Bill Opengari, Mary Harshfield, Eunice and John Hudgins*
- J. *James River, Arcadia to Buchanan—Barry Kinzie, Bob and Sherri Miller, Bill & Anne Tucker, John Pancake*
- K. *Johnson Farm, Visitors Center—Tim Quinn, Tom & Pat Johnson, Eleanor Dye*
- L. *Harvey's Knob Overlook—Joyce Holt, Katie James, Rosemary Ellis, Hugh Smith, Tina Kemper, Jim Hylton*
- M. *Parkway Black Horse Gap N to Peaks of Otter Lodge—Pam & Elly Wefel, Bill Grant*
- N. *Centerville/Claytor Center—Gene Sattler, Jim Elder, Norm Porter, Karl Huebner*

Thanks again to all the participants for another outstanding count. Mark your calendars now for the 39th Big Spring Day, which will be May 9, 2009.

***John Dalmas, 2008 Compiler***

(Copies of the compilation of sightings will be available at the September RVBC Meeting. The compilers used the 2008 *A Checklist of the Birds of Peaks of Otter Big Spring Day* published by the Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center.)

## **Wildlife Center of Virginia Fall Open-House Schedule**

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The Wildlife Center of Virginia, the nation's leading teaching and research hospital for native wildlife, has scheduled five open houses for Fall 2008. These are rare opportunities to see the inner workings of the nation's premier wildlife hospital, as well as meet some of the wild animals that serve as the Center's education ambassadors.

The open houses will be held on:

Sunday, September 7  
Sunday, September 21  
Sunday, September 28  
Sunday, October 12

The Center will have three separate sessions each day – at 12:30 p.m., 2:00 p.m., and 3:30 p.m. Each session lasts about an hour. As a wildlife emergency room and hospital, the Wildlife Center is not usually open to the public. The seasonal open houses are the times during the year when visitors may tour the Waynesboro facility. There is no charge to participate in an open house; however, reservations are required by calling (540) 942-9453 or [wildlife@wildlifecenter.org](mailto:wildlife@wildlifecenter.org). A limited number of spaces are available for each session.

## **16th Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival September 18-21**

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Don't miss the 16th annual Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival September 18-21. This is one of the premier wildlife viewing events on the East Coast. Virginia's Eastern Shore funnels huge numbers of migrating songbirds, raptors and shorebirds down the Delmarva Peninsula. This spectacular natural event offers a unique opportunity to appreciate Virginia's wild heritage. Our keynote address will be given by world renowned birder and author Pete Dunne.



The Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival offers boat- and land-based trips to a variety of beautiful spots on the shore—many not generally open to the public. The Wildlife Viewing Platform at Willis Wharf will be dedicated in a ceremony at 3:30 p.m. on September 19 in conjunction with the Eastern Shore Birding & Wildlife Festival. *You can register online at: <http://www.esvachamber.org/festivals/birding>.*

## **Northern Boreal Forest Conservation**

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On July 14 the Ontario province of Canada made the largest conservation commitment in Canadian history, setting aside almost half of the Northern Boreal region—87,672 square miles—for permanent protection from development. It's an area almost the size of the United Kingdom and home to the largest untouched forest in Canada and the third largest wetland in the world.

The Northern Boreal region covers 43 per cent of Ontario but only about 24,000 people, mostly in native communities accessible only by air, live there. It is home to over 200 sensitive species of animals, including Caribou, Wolverine and Lake Sturgeon, which have been driven from large parts of the southern forest by logging, mining, and other development.

## **Whimbrel Flies Non-stop For 146 Hours**

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The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary and The Nature Conservancy in Virginia used a satellite transmitter to track a Whimbrel from the Delmarva Peninsula in Virginia to the MacKenzie River near Alaska. This event documents an unknown migration route between the mid-Atlantic coast and the northwestern Arctic. The bird completed this apparent nonstop flight of more than 3,200 miles in 146 hours, and sustained an average flight speed of 22 mph for 6 days. This discovery sets a new distance record in the flight range of this species and highlights the importance of the Delmarva Peninsula as a staging area for migratory shorebirds. The Whimbrel, a large, highly migratory shorebird, includes two disjunct breeding populations—eastern and western—both of which winter in Central and South America. The eastern population breeds south and west of Hudson Bay in Manitoba and Ontario. This population is of high conservation concern due to declines in recent decades.

The discovery that Whimbrels use the Delmarva Peninsula as a terminal staging area before embarking on a flight suggests that the area is uniquely suited to provide the tremendous amount of energy required to prepare birds for long flight.

Continued research planned by the Center for Conservation Biology and The Nature Conservancy in Virginia will study the importance of this site to Whimbrel populations. This work will aid conservation efforts focused on shorebirds and stopover habitat preservation.

from *The Center for Conservation Biology*

## ***Cold Weather Survivors***

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Black-capped Chickadee are incredible winter survivors with assorted adaptations to the cold. Hidden food, dense winter feathers, winter roosting cavities, and the ability to go into nightly hypothermia to conserve energy greatly increases their chances of survival. Regulated hypothermia lowers the chickadee's body temperature down to about 12 or 15 degrees (F.) below their normal daytime temperature of 108 degrees (F.). This allows the bird to conserve almost 25 percent of its hourly metabolic expenditure when the outside temperature is at freezing. Chickadees struggle against starvation especially during a harsh winter. Every day they must replace the fat they burn overnight or starve. So, got Chickadees? Keep the feeders full.

From *enature*

## ***Outwitting Bully Birds***

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How often have you seen bigger birds chasing away American Goldfinches, or Carolina Chickadees from your bird feeders? These "bully birds" include American Crows, Blue Jays, European Starlings, and sometimes, even Mourning Doves. If this is a problem at your house, there are a few steps you can take to reduce or eliminate the bullies from eating all the food.

Bully birds are usually larger than those being bullied, and by enclosing the feeders in mesh hardware cloth or chicken wire, only the small birds can enter the feeding area.

Feeders with the weighted perches will keep out the bigger birds whose own weight lowers a bar over the food slots. And tube feeders with the perches above the port holes require the birds to lean down to feed, which discourages the bullies.

European Starlings can be discouraged from eating suet, by hanging the suet feeder under a domed squirrel baffle. Starlings don't like going up and under for food. There is also a starling proof suet feeder that can only be reached by birds from underneath, which starlings don't like, either.

You can also get rid of many bully birds if you don't feed them the foods they like, such as wild bird seed mixes containing millet, milo and cracked corn. Instead offer finch foods, such as niger (thistle) and safflower seeds.

## ***How Bird Feathers Get Their Colors***

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When you see the many birds at your feeders, have you wondered why they are different colors? The feathers of the most common birds are red, yellow, blue, black, and brown. There are two factors that determine the color of bird feathers – pigments and structural coloration. Some colors are combinations of the two.

Pigments, called carotenoids are found in red, orange, and yellow, while melanin pigments produce dark brown, gray, and black feathers; white feathers have no pigments at all. Body fluids carry the pigments into the feathers when they are formed.

More difficult to understand is structural coloration which produces blue feathers. There is no such thing as blue pigment in bird feathers. In all blue birds, the coloration is due to light reflected from a layer of blue-producing cells, which overlies the melanin (brown) pigment in the feathers. If you look at a blue feather through a microscope it would appear to be brown.

Blue feathers of Blue Jays, Eastern Bluebirds, Indigo Buntings, Tree Swallows, Cerulean Warblers, and Blue Grosbeaks, are the result of structural coloration: a layer of reflecting blue-producing cells that overlies brown pigment. Try to explain this to blue birds.

*Yulee Larner*

*Reprinted from the Staunton News Leader*

## ***Some Bird Species Extending Breeding Range Northward***

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A study by the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) has documented, for the first time in the northeastern United States, that a variety of bird species are extending their breeding ranges to the north.

Focusing on 83 species of birds that have traditionally bred in New York state, the researchers compared data collected in the early 1980s with information gathered between 2000 and 2005. They discovered that many species had extended their range boundaries, some by as much as 40 miles.

Among the species moving north are the Nashville Warbler and the Pine Siskin. Both birds have traditionally been seen in Northern New York but are showing significant retractions in their southern range boundaries. Birds moving north from more southern areas include the Red-bellied Woodpecker and the Carolina Wren.

The study compared data collected during the Breeding Bird Atlas census, which engaged thousands of citizen volunteers to observe and report the birds they could identify. The first atlas was created between 1980 and 1985; the second was done between 2000 and 2005.

New York was the first state to complete two breeding bird atlases making it the only state to produce this research thus far.

Similar changes were found in birds that breed in forests and those that inhabit grasslands, in both insectivores and omnivores, and even in new tropical migrants that are typically seen in Mexico and South America.

Scientists attribute the range extension to an increase in global temperatures.

from *ScienceDaily*

