



November 2011 Newsletter

*Celebrating 54 Years
of Birding! 1957-2011*

INSIDE:

*Report from the Nominating
Committee*

Field Trips.....2

Field Notes.....2

Sightings.....2

*Project FeederWatch
Begins November 12.....3*

*From Project FeederWatch:
Bigger Flocks are 'Smarter'
Flocks.....3*

*Landscaping for Cavity-
Nesting Birds.....3*

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

OCTOBER MEETING

RVBC members Sid and Mary Lou Barritt shared photos and stories of their trip to Alaska.

RVBC Annual Seed Sale Fund Raiser November 5

The sale is from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Northwest True Value Hardware 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

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 or phone: 719-0109; or Eunice Hudgins: uvaau@aol.com or phone: 389-4056.

There will be a small supply of extra seed available the day of the sale for those unable to pre-order.

NEXT MEETING:

**November 14, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

Dave Kramar, a doctoral candidate in the College of Natural Resources and Environment's Department of Geography at Virginia Tech, has studied eagles for many years. He has focused his research on the effects of contaminants, such as mercury and lead, on bald eagles. He has also conducted an extensive study on the bald eagle population in Virginia and will present his findings to us.



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

RVBC 2012 Calendar

RVBC calendars will be for sale at the Seed Sale and the November meeting. Please contact Carl Boast.

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**.

Report from the Nominating Committee

All of the 2011 Officers of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club have agreed to serve another year.

The Nominating Committee, Mary Lou Barritt, Pam Wefel, and Eunice Hudgin presents the following slate of officers for 2012:

President – Elly Wefel
Vice President (Programs) – Bill Grant
Vice President (Membership) – Eleanor Dye
Treasurer – Robin Austin
Secretary – Candy Andrzejewski
Directors at Large – Alyce Quinn and Eunice Hudgins

We currently need, however, someone to serve as the Refreshment Committee Chairman. If no one volunteers for this position, refreshments will no longer be served after the meetings with the exception of our Holiday Party in December.

Also, Beth Griffin, who has done an outstanding job arranging field trips, has stepped down as our Field Trip Chairman. Thus far, no one has offered to fill this position.

Nominations will be voted on at the November meeting.

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN **BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853**

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

Booker T. Washington National Monument, 9 AM, Nov. 12

Tim and Alyce Quinn will lead this trip. Birders will have a chance to see all three nuthatches and both kinglets, as well as yellow-rumped warblers, dark-eyed juncos, white-throated sparrows, and more. Meet at 9:00 in the Booker T. Washington National Monument parking lot.

Claytor Nature Center, 8 AM, Nov. 19

Back by popular demand, we will explore the varied trails at Claytor Nature Center in Bedford County. Bill Hunley (774-2397) will lead us there after meeting at Bonsack Kroger's. Dan Cohen (434) 661-8361, who works at the nature center, will meet us there. Expect a moderate amount of walking, including some hills. Varied habitat. Bring a lunch to enjoy at the picnic area before returning to Roanoke.

FIELD NOTES

THE BIG SIT! Sunday, October 9

On this sunny, cool day participants counted 27 species (28 if you include an unidentified warbler): great horned owl, whip-poor-will, northern cardinal, blue jay, northern



flicker, American crow, Canada goose, red-bellied woodpecker, Carolina wren, eastern bluebird, red-shouldered hawk, mourning dove, Carolina chickadee, yellow-

bellied sapsucker, common grackle, tufted titmouse, chimney swift, American robin, white-breasted nuthatch, common raven, red-eyed vireo, black vulture, pileated woodpecker, eastern phoebe, sharp-shinned hawk, eastern towhee, and turkey vulture.

A golden-crowned kinglet was heard outside the circles.

SIGHTINGS

Oct. 6: At Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center, Barry Kinzie saw a "sort of late" hummingbird along with arrivals of winter wren, ruby-crowned kinglets, and a small flock of white-throated sparrows.

Oct. 8: Barry Kinzie, Mike Smith, and Kent Davis birded along Route 614 near "soggy bottom." (Site suggested by Bill Hunley) They found warblers: Nashville, Cape May,



and palm, and their best bird of the day: marsh wren. They also saw an adult bald eagle. Grasshopper, savannah, and white-crowned sparrows were spotted not far from the New Castle STP. Yellow-bellied sapsucker, Swainson's

thrush, and both kinglets were seen at Fenwick Mines.

Oct. 9: Rupert Cutler sighted a male black-throated blue warbler and a female near the cattail marsh on the Lick Run Greenway. Also sighted: ruby-crowned and golden-crowned kinglets, and yellow-bellied sapsuckers. That makes 87 species that Rupert has seen on Lick Run.

Oct. 23: On Lick Run Greenway, Rupert Cutler reported swarms of yellow-rumped warblers, white-throated sparrows, and song sparrows, accompanied by bluebirds, phoebes, mockingbirds, a red-eyed vireo, a brown

thrasher, lots of American robins, northern cardinals and Carolina wrens, with small flocks of killdeer and cedar waxwings flying overhead. Farther along, in the woods along the creek, were, ruby-crowned kinglets, eastern towhees, Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice, and a great blue heron. Near the wetland (mile post 2.6) were northern flickers, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, red-bellied woodpeckers, white-breasted nuthatches, house finches, and gray catbirds.

Project FeederWatch Begins November 12

Backyard bird watchers can help scientists track changes by reporting which birds visit their feeders between November



and April through Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science program from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada.

Anyone can count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders and enter

their information on the FeederWatch website. Project FeederWatch is for all ages and skill levels.

To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Cornell Lab toll-free at (866) 982-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Cornell Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds, a calendar, complete instructions, and Winter Bird Highlights, an annual summary of FeederWatch findings.

From Project FeederWatch: Bigger Flocks are 'Smarter' Flocks

by Project FeederWatch Staff

Large groups of people tend to include individuals with a wide variety of skills and experiences, allowing larger groups to solve problems better than individuals or smaller groups. Recent research on European tits, cousins of North American chickadees, reveal that the same may be true in avian societies. The researchers tested the problem solving ability of wild birds by designing a feeder with a twist. The birds were required to pull two levers before seeds would be dispensed from the feeder. Could the birds overcome this challenge?

The birds were certainly interested in the feeders: 4,775 attempts were made to solve the problem by 197 individual birds. Of these attempts, 313 were successful (7.9%). Individuals in larger flocks were more likely to solve the problem and gain the food reward than were birds in smaller flocks. The chances of solving the problem may be related to how flocking influences the risk of exposure to predators. With many eyes watching for predators, each individual bird is afforded the luxury of more time to focus on feeding. Further,

the chances of solving the problem increased if the feeder was located close to protective tree cover, suggesting that feeding innovation is constrained by the threats posed by predators.

The "pool of competence" hypothesis predicts that larger groups include individuals with a broad diversity of skills and experiences that increase the collective ability of the group to overcome challenges. Although this hypothesis has been supported in other animal societies, this is the first study to test the idea on flocks of free-living birds. Indeed, flocks including an experienced bird (one that had been previously exposed to the special feeder) were more likely to ultimately solve the problem than flocks entirely composed of naive individuals. Because the feeders were designed to dispense many seeds when the problem was solved, all individuals living in the flocks benefited. This benefit of living in large groups likely holds under natural conditions, where all flock members may be able to exploit a novel food source discovered by one individual.

Source: Morand-Ferron, J. and J. L. Quinn. 2011. Larger groups of passerines are more efficient problem solvers in the wild. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 108:15898-15903.

Reprinted from Project FeederWatch

Landscaping for Cavity Nesting Birds

The Following Species are Attracted to These Plants:

- Red-bellied woodpecker: *Pine seeds, acorns and the fruits of shrubs such as elderberry, bayberry, red mulberry, and flowering dogwood; also eats insects*
- White-breasted nuthatch: *Maple, oak and pine trees for food and shelter; they also like beechnuts and hickory nuts*
- Tree swallow: *Berry-like succulent cones of juniper and small waxy fruits of bayberry, and wax myrtle shrubs*
- Tufted titmouse: *Acorns, as well as the fruits of bayberry, elderberry, hackberry and serviceberry*
- Brown-headed nuthatch: *Pine tree seeds and insects from the bark*
- Eastern bluebird: *Fruits of elderberry, hackberry, serviceberry, sumac, flowering dogwood, holly, red cedar, fox grape, and Virginia creeper*
- Downy woodpecker: *Fruit of serviceberry and wild strawberries, dogwood, mountain ash and Virginia creeper; eats beetles, spiders, and snails*
- Red-breasted nuthatch: *Seeds of pine, spruce, and fir trees, serviceberry, bayberry, winterberry and viburnum shrubs, as well as pines and birches*
- Pileated woodpecker: *Fruits of serviceberry, blackberry, wild strawberry, elderberry, hackberry, and red mulberry shrubs; also searches foliage for insects*
- Carolina wren: *Fruit of native bayberry shrubs and leaf mulch where it probes for insects*

From Project FeederWatch

