



# September 2009 Newsletter

*Celebrating 52 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2009*

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Visit our club's website  
at: [www.  
roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com)

## MAY MEETING

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

### Photo Contest Award

Congratulations to member Carl Boast whose photo of a Buller's Albatross won 2nd place in the Wildlife Category at the 15th Annual John Faber Memorial Photography Contest held over Memorial Day weekend at Trinity Church in Moneta.



Carol Boast©

## NEXT MEETING:

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

Join us as we honor the many contributions to our club by Peggy Spiegel Opengari, who passed away this summer. We will watch a video presentation of her favorite birds, *Dances with Hummingbirds*. After the video Bill Grant will present an update on the *State of the Birds 2009*.

*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 7, 2009

### 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 7 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Northwest True Value Hardware Company 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

**The October newsletter will include the form for placing your orders. (The order form will also be available on the RVBC website.) Orders must be received by October 12.**

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.

### 2010 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, Robin Austin.**

## **Tribute to a Friend**

*Watch, observe, embrace life with courage and good sense, make friends wherever you find yourself, and teach others from a place of passion and insight...these are some of the principles we learned from life with Mom.*



Thus began the beautiful eulogy for Peggy Spiegel Opengari, presented lovingly by her daughter, Phyllis. A dear friend and fellow club member, Peggy lost her short but courageous battle with pancreatic cancer in mid-July. Peggy will be remembered for many things--her work with the Girl Scouts when her own children were young; as owner of two wild bird stores called For the Birds; her tireless work promoting birding around the world by organizing field trips both locally and to many exotic destinations; as a much sought-after speaker at bird clubs and other organizations; her many years of dedicated service to the Virginia Society of Ornithology; and as the creator and driving force behind the Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival.

But most of all, Peggy will be remembered as a friend. During her mother's memorial service, Phyllis told us all that in the early days of Peggy's relationship with her husband Bill, he had finally asked, "Do you know all of these people you talk to?" after she had gotten into a conversation with someone in an elevator. He thought that everywhere they went she must be running into people she knew because she was always getting into conversations with people. That's just the way Peggy was. Minutes after you met her, you knew you had a new friend.

Shortly after Peggy passed away, a co-worker asked me if Peggy was a "good" friend of mine. That was a tough question to answer. We didn't call each other on the phone just to chat. We didn't go out for the evening together. In fact, we only saw each other a few times a year. But any time I knew our paths were about to cross, I took great delight in the fact that I was going to be able to spend time with her again. She was one of those people who could brighten up your day just by being in it. I cherish the times we spent together and wish there had been many more. I feel blessed to have known Peggy and honored to consider her a friend. The world will be a sadder place without her in it.

*Alyce Quinn*

*May your voice entwine with a wood thrush's flute.  
Your spirit soar with a peregrine's vigor  
and your energy be a reflection off the whirl of a ruby throat's wings  
For just as these birds are near us,  
you will always be with us.*

--poem by Mary Ratliff

[Note: The Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the New River Valley Bird Club are working on establishing a memorial fund in Peggy's name. The idea is still in the planning stages, and further information will be provided as soon as we have the details worked out. Donations to the fund will be handled by the VSO.]

## **Board Notes**

For 2009, the RVBC Board voted to donate funds to the following organizations:

Woodpecker Ridge Nature Preserve	\$200
Wildlife Care Alliance	\$200
Girl Scouts of Virginia Skyline Council (for purchase of binoculars)	\$300
Grandin Road Baptist Church	\$75

There are many other organizations worthy of RVBC support. The board asks that club members consider making personal donations to the following organizations:

**American Birding Conservancy** Works to solve many threats to birds including pesticides, cats, lighted towers, and windows throughout the United States and Latin America <http://www.abcbirds.org/>

### **Center for Conservation Biology Golden Eagle Tracking Project**

The Center has been tracking several Golden Eagles including Virgil Caine, a female eagle (in early Aug. Virgil was in upstate New York). <http://www.ccb-wm.org/programs/migration/GoldenEagle/goldeneagle.htm>

**Fatal Light Awareness Program** Help prevent window collisions. Visit the *Fatal Light Awareness Program* at [http://www.flap.org/new/nestegg\\_3.htm](http://www.flap.org/new/nestegg_3.htm). This excellent site includes an online form for reporting bird collisions and also provides valuable information for preventing daytime and nocturnal collisions.

## **Barry Kinzie Awarded National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Conservation Medal**

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The DAR Conservation Award is given to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding efforts in wildlife and nature centers; resource management; park establishment, youth leadership; and conservation-related media and education. Club member Barry Kinzie established Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center as a nature preserve. Barry has lead bird count expeditions for over thirty years and has helped establish migratory bird patterns.

Barry and his wife, Teresa, were honored at the Annual Meeting of the Roanoke Valley Chapter, NSDAR on May 9.

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

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September is a great time to watch for raptors. Bald Eagles and Ospreys tend to migrate early in the season. Last year, on Sept. 17, 3,646 *Broad-winged Hawks* glided over *Harvey's Knob*.

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

## **Roanoke Valley Bird Club 2010 Calendar Submissions Due Sept. 14**

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All calendar photos or artwork by members can be submitted at any time up to the September RVBC meeting on Sept. 14.

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, however, provide your name on an accompanying sheet. A committee will select the final images for the calendar from the received submissions. Submitted materials will be returned.

Please submit photos or artwork for our 2010 calendar by September 14 to Carl Boast: 3368 Hickory Cove Lane, Moneta, VA 24121.

If you would like to be on the selection committee please contact Carl at:  
[carlandlinda@earthlink.net](mailto:carlandlinda@earthlink.net) or phone: 540-297-7336

## **THE BIG SIT! Sunday, October 11**

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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.

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) 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 11, 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!

## **FIELD TRIPS**

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**CHAIRMAN**

**BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853**

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

### **Sept. 12, 8:00 AM, Peaks of Otter**

Meet Bill Hunley at the Peaks of Otter Lodge (NOT the Visitor's Center). We will walk around Abott Lake (about 1 level mile ) looking mostly for fall warblers. After the walk, please join us for breakfast at the Peaks of Otter Lodge.

### **Sept. 19, 8:00 AM, 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.

# FIELD NOTES

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## ***Appalachian Trail, Saturday, May 16, 8:00 AM.***

Bob Miller led birders up to the nearby Appalachian Trail near Arcadia. The birders enjoyed a leisurely walk along the trails and spotted or heard: Barred Owl, Red-tailed Hawk, Eastern Phoebe, Dark-eyed Junco, Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, Black-and-white Warbler, Wood Thrush, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay and American Goldfinch.

## ***Cranberry Glades in W. VA, June 12-13***

Club member Toni Pepin led a trip to the Cranberry Glades in West Virginia. The Glades consists of four bogs with plant and animal life similar to that found in the bogs or “muskegs” of the northern U.S.



Carl Boast©

The birders had great views of male and female Red Crossbills feeding on the green cones of a spruce on the lawn near the Nature Center. Other highlights: Veery, Common Nighthawk, Alder Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Hermit Thrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Canada Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler (building a nest), Hooded Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Dark-eyed Junco, Cedar Waxwing, and Purple Finch.

## ***Bent Mtn, Saturday August 1, 8:30***

Allen and Robin Austin held their annual open house potluck on August 1st. They birded along Bottom Creek Rd. on Bent Mtn. Highlights included: Barred Owl, Blue-headed Vireo, Dark-eyed Junco, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

# SIGHTINGS

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Alyce Quinn heard a Kentucky Warbler on June 12 near her property in Burnt Chimney. The area has been a breeding spot for White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat and Prairie Warbler, and even a Blue-winged Warbler came through one spring, but this was a first for a Kentucky on their property.

On June 20, Barry Kinzie sighted three Willow Flycatchers singing at different locations at Greenfield. Two of them were at locations other than the pond.

On June 27, Mike Purdy saw a Violet-crowned

Hummingbird in Craig County. A rare sighting in VA.; this hummer is generally found in western Texas.

On July 8, Zach Thompson birded near the Staunton River at Long Island and saw a flock of Horned Larks and a Grasshopper Sparrow, and Blue Grosbeaks.

## ***Coalfields Folk Life Festival***

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The festival was centered in Grundy, June 5–7, a historical coal mining town in Buchanan County. Candy Andrzejewski, Alyce and Tim Quinn, and Carol Siler attended several birding walks sponsored by the Buchanan Bird Club.

The birders stayed at Breaks Interstate Park known as the Grand Canyon of the South. Highlights: Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Wood Thrush, Veery, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

## ***Birding in Ohio***

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In early May, Elly & Pam Wefel, Tom & Pat Johnson, Bob & Andy Biggs and John & Eunice Hudgins traveled to Ohio to do some birding. Most of their time was spent on the shores of Lake Erie at Magee Marsh Wildlife area, but they also visited Ottawa NWR and Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area.

A total of 128 birds were seen in three days. Some of these were: Trumpeter, Mute & Tundra Swans, Common Moorhen, Wilson’s Phalarope, Black Tern, Black-billed Cuckoo, Whip-poor-will, Gray-cheeked Thrush, and Lincoln’s Sparrow. Of the total birds seen, 28 were warblers which included Golden-winged, Tennessee, Nashville, Cape May, Blackburnian, Bay-breasted, Mourning and Northern Waterthrush. They saw numerous Bald Eagles and it was interesting to hear the local birders voice their excitement on the return of nesting eagles to their lakeshore.

This great birding area attracts birders from many places, but it was a surprise running into fellow Virginia birders Stan Bentley from Pulaski and Larry Lynch from Richmond. If you’ve never been to Magee Marsh, put it on your calendar for a future trip. For more information on these birding locations, visit the following websites:

[www.mageemarsh.com](http://www.mageemarsh.com)

[www.friendsofmageemarsh.org](http://www.friendsofmageemarsh.org)

Ottawa NWR – [www.fws.gov/midwest/ottawa/](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/ottawa/)

Metzger Marsh Wildlife Area –

[http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/wild\\_resourcessubhomepage/WildlifeAreaMaps/NorthwestOhioWildlifeAreaMap](http://www.dnr.state.oh.us/Home/wild_resourcessubhomepage/WildlifeAreaMaps/NorthwestOhioWildlifeAreaMap)

## **39th Annual Big Spring Day At The Peaks Of Otter – May 9, 2009**

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Another great day for birding for the 39th annual Big Spring Day count, despite the dire weather predictions. We found 120 species for the day.

A Peregrine Falcon, found by Bill & Peggy Opengari's party, and a Bald Eagle, found by Barry Kinzie's party, were perhaps the best birds of the day. This is only the third Big Spring Day record for each of these species. The best near-miss was the Anhinga (!) seen the day before by Rexanne Bruno while scouting her territory, the first such sighting for the area and only the sixth record of this species in Piedmont Virginia. This got me to thinking about our cumulative total of 196 birds, and that we haven't added any new ones for a few years, and what it would take to get us to 200.

After all these years, there were a surprising number of new high counts, including Black Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Tufted Titmouse, Cedar Waxwing, Black-throated Blue Warbler, and Black-and-white Warbler. There were also very high counts for Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, Blue-headed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, Ovenbird, and Hooded Warbler.

We missed Northern Bobwhite again—the decline of this once common species continues to baffle biologists. Other species we missed but find more often than not include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-throated Warbler, Savannah Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Purple Finch. I would have expected some lingering Pine Siskins after last winter, even with the relatively late count date, but none were found. Significant declines were also noted for Belted Kingfisher, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat. The good news is that the Cerulean Warbler, which is showing steep declines in many areas, is still holding its own on Big Spring Day.

The compilation follows the 2008 edition of *A Checklist of the Birds of Peaks of Otter Big Spring Day* published by the Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center. Segments of the count area shown on the compilation were covered by the following parties:

- A1. Flat Top Overlook to Sunset Field-Tom & Pat Johnson
- A2. Fallingwater Cascades-Liz Williams, Linda Barker, Carol Siler
- B. Buchanan-Alyce Quinn, Connie Marsh, Deborah Ingram
- C. Sheep Creek Road-Susan Stanton, Mark Johnson, Jo Wood, Glennys Sheppard, Carolyn Mahone
- D. Parkers Gap (Warbler) Road-Thelma & John Dalmas
- E. Jennings/North/Middle/McFalls Creeks--Mike Purdy

F. Bedford Lake, Wheats Valley, Stoney/Overstreet Creeks-Peggy Lyons, Joanne Pierce, Peter Jowaisis, Mike Boatwright

G. Goose Creek Valley-Bill & Peggy Opengari, Sissy Logan, Janie & Norris Ford, John & Eunice Hudgins

H. Thaxton, Penicks Mill-Henry Woodward, Maureen Eiger, Mary Harshfield, Michael Townsend

I. Arcadia, Solitude-Barry Kinzie, Bob & Sherri Miller, Bill & Anne Tucker, Trish Webb, Andy Biggs, Alison Dickey

K. Johnson Farm, Visitors Center-Tim Quinn, Candy Andrzejewski, Robin Austin

L. Harveys Knob Overlook-Joyce & David Holt, Katie & Bill James

M. Parkway Black Horse Gap N to Peaks of Otter Lodge-Pam Wefel

N. Centerville/Claytor Center-Rexanne Bruno, Gene Sattler, Jim Elder, Norm Porter, John Styrsky, Judy Wiegand

Thanks again to all the participants for another outstanding count. Mark your calendars now for the 40th Big Spring Day, which will be May 1, 2010.

*John Dalmas, 2009 Compiler*

## **Big Spring Day At The Peaks Of Otter**

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We keep talking about Big Spring Day. Do you know what it is and ever wonder what you might be missing?

This is a cooperative bird count (yes, we really count all the birds seen and sometimes heard) by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club (RVBC) and the Lynchburg Bird Club (LBC). The first event was organized in 1971 by Dennis Carter of the National Park Service. After Dennis was transferred, Bill Opengari (RVBC) stepped in to organize and publish



the results from 1972 until 1995. Then John Dalmas (LBC) took over the job as compiler, and continues to this day. The 7-1/2 mile radius circle is covered by ten teams organized by Eunice Hudgins of the RVBC (since 2000) and four teams organized by Thelma

Dalmas and Susan Stanton of the LBC (since 1996). Barry Kinzie and Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center sponsor the event. For more information on WRNC, visit <http://RoanokeBird.tripod.com>, click on Birding Sites and scroll to the WRNC site.

Seeing beautiful spring migrants in areas you may have never explored makes for a fun day. Let's do a walk-through of the day and learn what the teams encounter in the various locations. Following are the 2009 RVBC territories, the participants and some unique sightings.

To reach *Goose Creek Valley* travel past Montvale on Rt. 460 and turn left on Rt. 741. The route travels through a beautiful valley with a variety of habitats and ends at the Blue Ridge Parkway. Norris & Janie Ford, Sissy Logan, and John & Eunice Hudgins were pleasantly surprised when their leader, Bill Opengari, showed up with Peggy!! It was so good to see her feeling energetic and excited about birding. Peggy spotted the best bird of the morning—a beautiful Peregrine Falcon swooping across a field directly toward the group. Some other birds spotted were: Warbling Vireo, Hooded Warbler, Grasshopper Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Yellow-throated Vireo. This group had a total of 71 species and counted 569 birds.

The *Buchanan* group drove out Rt. 11 and started their territory behind the North Star Restaurant. From there they birded around the river on Rt. T625. From the river, they drove up Rt. 43 to Pico Road, which is a loop that brought them back to Rt. 11. From there they headed back up Rt. 43 to the Parkway. Alyce Quinn, Connie Marsh and Deborah Ingram saw many birds, including a beautiful Wood Duck, a Double-crested Cormorant, Common Raven, and Pine Warbler, but spotting three Green Herons—two of them perched in trees—was really special. This group had a total of 65 species and counted 420 birds.



The *Arcadia/Solitude* group began birding this premier territory at the James River Bridge on Rt. 614 where Barry Kinzie, Anne & Bill Tucker, Bob & Sherri Miller and Andy Biggs found an adult Bald Eagle for

new member, Trish Webb, and her friend, Alison Dickey. Then they continued down Rt. 614 stopping to bird around the church before turning onto Rt. 622. This road runs past a swamp and other varied habitats before it ends at private property. This group saw the only Great Blue Heron, Northern Waterthrush and Belted Kingfisher of the count. Other birds seen were: Wood Duck, American Kestrel, Swainson's Thrush, Blue Grosbeak, and Yellow-breasted Chat. This group had a total of 73 species and counted 489 birds.

Mike Purdy started *The Creeks–Jennings, North & Mcfalls* territory just past the entrance to Solitude (Rt. 622). Among the birds discovered on this trip following the three creeks were: two Broad-winged Hawks, Yellow-throated Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush. Mike had a total of 41 species and counted 213 birds.

Birding the *Blue Ridge Parkway–Blackhorse Gap North To Peaks Of Otter Lodge* kept Pam Wefel busy looking and stopping to listen or spot a bird. One of those stops was observed by the Parkway Police causing Pam to get a lecture that she was not safely off the road! In spite of

the slight disruption, some of the birds she observed were: Eastern Wood-pewee, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Bluebird, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and Worm-eating Warbler. Pam had a total of 28 species and counted 130 birds.

The *Thaxton/Penick's Mill* is a territory that winds five miles through the beautiful valley below the Peaks of Otter on the Lynchburg side of the mountain. Henry Woodward and Mary Harshfield introduced Maureen Eiger and Mike Townsend to this interesting area. Some of the birds seen were: Tennessee Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Killdeer, Acadian Flycatcher, Yellow-throated Vireo, Purple Martin, and House Wren. They had a total of 66 species and counted 477 birds.

Liz Williams, Carol Siler and Linda Barker birded the *Blue Ridge Parkway–Fallingwater Cascades* territory just past the Peaks of Otter Lodge. At the Flat Top parking lot, they hiked the loop trail to Falling Water Cascades, which returned them to the trail paralleling the Parkway. Some of the birds seen were Red-tailed Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Veery, Blackpoll Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak, but watching a Worm-eating Warbler building a nest was, by far, their best bird of the day! They had a total of 32 species and counted 116 birds. A four-foot Black Rat Snake also got their attention as they watched it crawl into a rotten log. On the way to the tally, this group was delayed when they stopped to rescue four Box Turtles in the road. Just goes to show you that sometimes birdwatching is a lot more than just looking at birds!

How many of you have seen the sign to Johnson Farm just across the road from the Peaks of Otter Lodge? Tim Quinn and his group can tell you that the *Johnson Farm & Visitor Center* territory is well worth doing. Starting at the Visitor Center, Tim led Candy Andrzejewski and Robin Austin on a walk around the parking lot and the amphitheater, before following the trail to the far side of the loop (second left). They crossed a meadow and wooded area before hiking the grade road to the farm. They birded around the buildings, open area and to the hilltop before following the loop trail back. This group saw the only Blue-winged Warbler of the day. Some other birds seen were: an eye-level look at a Blackburnian Warbler, Hairy, Downy & Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Scarlet Tanager, and Acadian Flycatcher. They had a total of 46 species and counted 199 birds.

For more information about the Johnson Farm, check out the following: The Peaks of Otter and the Johnson Farm on the Blue Ridge Parkway by Jean Haskell Speer. ([http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/sero/appalachian/sec3.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/sero/appalachian/sec3.htm)) The Putnam family referred to in this article is Lynchburg's Myriam Putnam Moore's

family. Myriam (1912–2006) is remembered not only for her work with the VSO, but for helping to put Harvey’s Knob on the map as a prime hawk watching site in Virginia. She was lovingly known to many hawk watchers as the “Hawk Lady.”

*Blue Ridge Parkway-Harvey’s Knob* is the only Big Spring Day territory where you are invited to bring your chair! Our faithful hawk watchers, David & Joyce Holt and Bill & Katie James, had their eyes on the sky most of Big Spring Day. Of course, with their well-trained sharp eyes trained their list included Osprey, Red-shouldered, Broad-winged & Red-tailed Hawks, Great-crested Flycatcher, Chimney Swift, Common Raven, Blackburnian Warbler, and Dark-eyed Junco. They had a total of 33 species and counted 85 birds.

Tom & Pat Johnson started their *Blue Ridge Parkway–Flat Top Overlook To Floyd’s Field* territory at the Flat Top parking lot. They headed north stopping at the overlooks, fire trails and other places where they could safely pull off the road. Some of their birds were: Red-shouldered & Red-tailed Hawks, Red-bellied, Downy & Pileated Woodpeckers, Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Wood Thrush, Northern Parula, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, and Dark-eyed Junco. They had a total of 25 species and counted 112 birds.

If you would like more information on the territories, contact Eunice Hudgins at 389-4056 or [uvaau@aol.com](mailto:uvaau@aol.com) or Pam Wefel at 977-0636 or [pewefel@aol.com](mailto:pewefel@aol.com). Go explore some of these areas and next spring sign up to help us count birds.

*Eunice Hudgins*

## ***Eastern Cougar Foundation Needs Funding***

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The foundation is seeking funding sources for a \$150,000 documentary film on the Eastern Cougar. The ECF: (<http://www.easterncougar.org>) separates fact from fiction concerning the eastern cougar. The film will tell the story of the eastern cougar’s decline, detail the loss of biodiversity, and show how cougar restorations will restore the critical balance missing from eastern forests. If you know of a possible funding source please contact: [christopherspatz@easterncougar.org](mailto:christopherspatz@easterncougar.org), or call Christopher Spatz, President, Eastern Cougar Foundation at 845-658-9889.

## ***Rare And Unusual Bird Discovered In Augusta County***

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Since I began writing columns about birds in 1977, this is the rarest one of all. It describes a most unusual bird that was discovered near Lyndhurst on June 15, 2009. That day, Gale Heffinger, who is a Biological Technician for the Southwestern Va. Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, was checking birds in nest boxes. For some time, biologists have been studying the level of mercury in the South River, and its

effect on birds and other wildlife. That day birds in the nest boxes were being checked along that section of the South River.

Heffinger was surprised to see, in a flooded field owned by Waynesboro Nursery, a large pink bird, one for which there is no documented record in the entire state of Virginia. It was a Roseate Spoonbill that normally lives in the Gulf States, Chile, and Argentina, but mostly in South America. Its preferred habitat consists of coastal marshes, lagoons, and mud flats. Drainage of wetlands may cause a decrease in populations.

The recent rains in our area had settled into several puddles in the grassy fields, providing the spoonbill a place where it could find tadpoles and other small creatures that live in the water. After the remarkable discovery, Heffinger contacted Andy McGann, M.S. Candidate in the Department of Biology, College of William and Mary who posted the information on VaBird website, so that the word spread fast to gung-ho birdwatchers, who arrived in large numbers from all over the state. When the rain stopped, the puddles dried up and there was no water to support tadpoles and other food for the spoonbill. With diminished food supply, the spoonbill left. It stayed until June 19, but for five days it attracted birders, some of whom had never seen a Roseate Spoonbill before.

One of the most beautiful birds in the country, the adult spoonbill is a large, bright pink, long-legged bird, with a long spoonlike bill. Its head is bare and light green and its tail is orange. The Augusta County bird was an immature and therefore pale pink all over with a feathered head. In three years, the faint pink will become brighter.

The Augusta County Roseate Spoonbill will be the first documented Virginia record if accepted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM). My rarest column since 1977!

*Yulee Larner*

*Reprinted from the Staunton News Leader*

## ***New Spotted Owl Recovery Plan to be Developed***

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Washington, D.C. July 16, 2009) The Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that the previous administration’s plan to reduce designated critical habitat for the Northern Spotted Owl were being reversed.

A new Northern Spotted Owl recovery plan will now be developed.

The Western Oregon Plan would have reduced habitat for the threatened Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet. An estimated 680 known Spotted Owl sites and 600 Marbled Murrelet sites would have been eliminated.

*Summarized from <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/090716.html>*

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