



# March '17 Newsletter

Celebrating 60 Years of Birding  
1957-2017

## NEXT MEETING

Monday, March 13th at 7PM  
Grandin Court Baptist Church  
2660 Brambleton Ave. Roanoke, VA 24015

(Join fellow club members for dinner at 5:30PM at Brambleton Deli; 3655 Brambleton Ave.)

## Conserving Virginia's Birds with Science and Action

Presented by Ashley Peele, Ph.D.



Dr. Ashley Peele is the State Coordinator for the VA Breeding Bird Atlas, and she will be speaking about the launch of this project for its second field season. Come hear more about how Virginia's birding community is diving into active bird conservation through citizen science. Dr. Peele will share some of the early, exciting results from the 2016 Atlas season, discuss priority species for the Roanoke area, and answer questions on how anyone with an interest in birds can get involved with this project. She might even squeeze in some interesting photos from her work on migratory species in Jamaica, touching on how this work connects with our conservation efforts in VA.

Dr. Peele is an Avian Ecologist based at the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech. She recently obtained a PhD in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Tulane University. Her graduate work focused on the relationship between habitat quality and intrinsic population dynamics in regulating populations of the American Redstart, during the non-breeding season. As part of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center research program, she spent five years studying these and other migratory warblers in Jamaica. Prior to this, she received her BA in Zoology from Ohio Wesleyan University and worked on many other bird research and conservation programs all over the United States.

## SIGHTINGS

Kathy Clemo— All 3 species of Nuthatches, Savannah Sparrow, Kingfisher

Alyce Quinn— Bald eagle

Tadd Finnel— Horned grebes

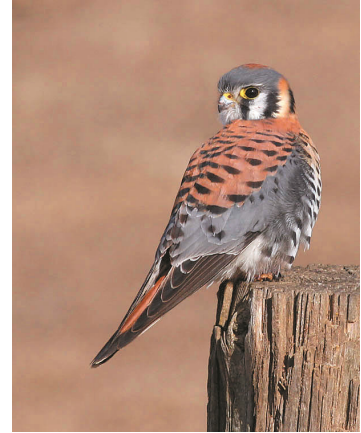
Sid Barrett— Roughlegged Hawk

Mary Harshfield— 2 American kestrels

Nancy Luce— Ringed Billed Gulls

Nathan Anderson— White Crowned Sparrow

Artie Kidd— All 3 species Nuthatches



On February 4th a neighbor of Joanie and Ed Kinser reported an unusual goldfinch at her feeder. It turns out it was a Leucistic Goldfinch.

(Leucism is a condition in which there is partial loss of pigmentation in an animal resulting in white, pale, or patchy coloration of the skin, hair, feathers, scales or cuticle, but not the eyes. Unlike albinism, it is caused by a reduction in multiple types of pigment, not just melanin.)



## Field Trip Reports



### **2/26 Pond Hopping**

Due to the lack of waterfowl in the Roanoke area, the only pond we hopped to was the one at Greenfield where we found 29 species. The best birds there were gadwall, green-winged teal, ring-necked duck, bufflehead, hooded merganser, pied-billed grebe, coot, phoebe, golden-crowned kinglet, robin and red-winged blackbird. From there we visited Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center where we found 18 species, the most inter-

esting of which were red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, hermit thrush and a flock of about a dozen fox sparrows.

## 1/28 Creeks and Rivers

Due to poor weather and low attendance, this trip was kept closer to home. The group birded Greenfield with 35 species. For waterfowl, we got good looks at Northern Pintails, Ruddy Ducks and a Kingfisher. For passerines, we spotted White-crowned sparrows and 20 field sparrows. Great looks were also had of Hairy Woodpeckers and Brown Creepers.



## 2/8 Second Wednesday Walk at Greenfield

Eight hardy birders attended this walk on a blustery day and all agreed that it was worth it. Although the total species count was only 36, they were treated to an amazing array including Green-winged Teal, Ring-Necked Duck, Blufflehead, Re-shouldered Hawk, Golden-crowned Kinglet and the resident Belted Kingfisher.

## 2/18 Highland County Trip



14 club members were treated to an unusually warm winter day in Bath and Highland counties. Most of the waterfowl was seen at our first stop was at Mill Run Pond which produced 36 species including Bufflehead, a pair of Common Mergansers, and two large flocks of Horned Larks. The caravan then traveled through the back roads of Monterey, Hightown, the beautiful Blue Grass Valley and the high country along the West Virginia line. Other highlights were a Harrier, a Sharp-shinned hawk as well as 3 Kestrels that were

in a flurry and two Bald Eagles. Although Golden Eagles were not seen, the group came away with 52 species, a fun day and dinner at Vic's in Clifton Forge on the way back.

## 2/3 to 2/5 VSO Field Trip to Outer Banks, NC

13 RVBC members joined 90 other birders from around the state to enjoy a fabulous weekend at the annual VSO Outer Banks field trip! We tallied a record-setting 155 species. Among these were several rarities: Manx Shearwater, Dovekie, Trumpeter Swan, Anna's Hummingbird, Eurasian Wigeon, Anhinga, Lark Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird and Loggerhead Shrike. We also had an amazing 11 species of Sparrows and 5 Wren species. See <http://www.viriniabirds.org/events/field-trip-reports/20170203-outer-banks> for the entire tally and some pictures of the weekend.



## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

(For any additional information please contact Linda Cory at 540-580-5214 or RVBC2015@outlook.com)

### **Second Wednesday Bird Walk at Greenfield, March 8th, 9AM**

Join co-leaders Barry Whitt (309-4353) and Kent Davis (355-6388) for a leisurely bird walk on the Cherry Blossom Trail at Greenfield. We will walk around Greenfield Lake in search for waterfowl and songbirds. The walk will be about 1 1/2 miles. There are benches along the trail for "birding from the bench". Other walking may be through damp grass to the field overlooking the lake or the trail down to the lower pond. Bring your spotting scopes! Meet at the second parking lot at Greenfield on the right across the road from the lake. Greenfield is located on Route 220 in Botetourt County. Directions: Take Exit 150B on I81 and then a right onto Route 11 for a quarter mile. Take a right onto Route 220N. Go 3.8 miles and take a left at the entrance to Greenfield.

### **Woodcock Walk on Bent Mountain, Sat., March 11th, 5:30PM**

Meet Robin Austin (929-5222) at the Bent Mountain Community Center for an evening walk of birding and Woodcock watching. We will visit the boardwalk at the community center (formerly Bent Mountain Elementary school) and then walk the surrounding area. Walking is level, but wear waterproof shoes just in case. The group will then carpool to a nearby area to observe the Woodcocks that start their courtship flight at sunset. The Community Center is at 10148 Tinsley Lane, Bent Mountain VA 24059.

### **Back Creek/Blue Ridge Parkway Bird Walk, Sat., March 18, 8:00AM**

Club member Gary Oberlender (529-7566) will host a bird walk on the wooded mountainside behind his home which borders the Blue Ridge Parkway just below the Roanoke Valley Overlook. Habitats will include pine and mixed hardwood forests, open fields, and wooded creek bottoms. Terrain will vary and at times will climb steeply but we will walk slowly and listen carefully for early spring birds. Wear good walking shoes and layered clothing appropriate to the weather forecast and bring water and a snack. The walk will conclude around noon. From Cave Spring Corner (419/Electric Road and US 221/Bent Mountain Road), take US 221 south 5 miles towards Bent Mountain. Turn left on Old Mill Road (Rt. 752). Cross the creek and bear left. Look for the meeting area at Lawrence Lane (second gravel drive on the left) to park.

### **Locher Tract, Arcadia and Solitude Swamp, Sat., April 1<sup>st</sup>, 8AM**

Join Educator Bill Hunley (774-2397) at 8AM at Botetourt Commons for an interesting field trip to Locher Tract, located in the Jefferson National Forest. This is a managed wildlife habitat that contains woods, open fields, a beaver pond and good views of the James River. We can expect a good variety of birds, including early migrant warblers, Wood Duck and Fox Sparrow. Locher Tract is near Natural Bridge Station in Rockbridge County. There will be 1-2 miles of level walking. We will then visit the Arcadia area and nearby Solitude Swamp. This field trip includes some of our club's favorite birding spots. We will meet in the parking lot near the Bojangle's drive-in (5 Kingston Dr, Daleville, VA).

## Work Day at Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center, Sat., April 8<sup>th</sup>, 8:00AM

This is an annual event that promises to be fun birding along with the work. Join Barry Kinzie 540-309-4353 at 8AM to Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center for a morning of clean-up and maintenance of the nature trails. All are welcome to bring a picnic and stay for the remainder of the day, birding and exploring the nature center. Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center Directions: From I-81, take Exit #150B. Turn left on US 11 North and follow it 2.6 miles to Rt. 651/Stoney Battery Road in Troutville. Turn right and follow 0.9 miles to Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center (#941) on the left

## CLUB NEWS

### **Bird of the Month - American Woodcock**

Every Spring, usually early March, the Roanoke Valley Bird Club has an evening field trip to listen and look for American Woodcocks calling and displaying. The males have a loud plaintive call (peent! Peent!) and their courtship flight includes erratic upward flying ending in up to 300 foot dives. The purpose? To show off and attract females as a potential mate.

They can be found in our area displaying just after sunset in swampy and moist forested areas. Starkey Wetlands is a favorite spot where the flight displays can be viewed from the South County library parking lot at 6303 Merriman Road. Bent Mountain also has suitable habitat and a walk is planned there for March 11th at 5:30pm (see notice in this newsletter).

Woodcocks migrate (males first) through our area from mid-February to April, but on occasion have been known to nest here (although they usually nest further north). They are well camouflaged as I discovered one day almost stepping on one in a forested area. On another occasion, one of our club members found one just by seeing it blink. Other than that, we would have never known the woodcock was there. Although these squat-bodies birds stay well hidden, all bets are off when they start their flight displays.

Interesting facts: As most birds, the American Woodcock also have local names. Some are timberdoodle, Labrador twister, bogsucker and mudsnipe. Although the males and females look alike, the female is slightly larger with a longer bill. Woodcocks love earth worms. Scientists have found that when compared to other birds, their brains are upside-down due to a strange evolution process. Woodcocks are not monogamous. They are ground nesters with the chicks able to walk within hours of hatching (precocial) and being able to fly at two weeks. Although they are game birds, the reason for their decline in population is due to loss of habitat. Hope to see you at the March 11th Woodcock Walk.



### **RAPTOR COUNT**

On Saturday, February 11, ten groups went out on the annual Raptor Count. It was one of those pretty spring days, so it was great to be outside birding again! New River Valley Bird Club participated again this year, with a club field trip to Burkes Garden. They were the big winners, helped by a Northern Harrier, 5 Golden Eagles and 3 Bald Eagles. Four different teams spotted eagles, including three on nests! Details are included. Thanks to all for getting out and hopefully enjoying the day! Next year, plan on getting a team together – second Saturday in February.

2017 RAPTOR COUNT TALLY

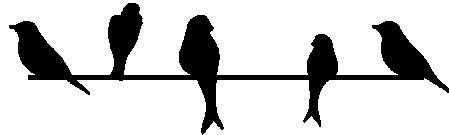
SPECIES	TEAM A	TEAM B	TEAM C	TEAM D	TEAM E	TEAM F	TEAM G	TEAM H	TEAM I	TEAM J	TOTAL SPECIES
TURKEY VULTURE	45	28	83	21	24	63	0	8	101	38	411
BLACK VULTURE	3	6	52	48	4	15	10	4	39	45	226
RED-TAILED HAWK	5	2	10	1	8	2	11	1	13	4	57
AMERICAN KESTREL	2	2	1		4			3	6	1	19
COMMON RAVEN		9	3	2	25	1			1		41
COOPER'S HAWK										1	1
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK						1	1				2
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK					1					1	1
NORTHERN HARRIER					3						1
BALD EAGLE		3	6	2	5						14
GOLDEN EAGLE											5
UNIDENTIFIED RAPTOR	1		1						4		6
TOTAL BIRDS	56	50	156	74	74	82	22	16	164	90	784
TOTAL POINTS	101	310	505	196	1052	120	95	51	265	168	

\*\*\* RECEIVED 10 BONUS POINTS FOR PEAK VULTURE COUNTS

TEAM A - Mary Ellen Belcher & Sage (keeping an eye on Robin & Allen Austin) - Bent Mountain, Franklin County  
 TEAM B - Jim & Judy Phillips - Giles County, along New River, etc.  
 TEAM C - Patsy Cline with Katie & Bill James - Rte 220 to Lake Moomaw and back  
 TEAM D - Joyce Holt, Eunice Huddins & Liz Williams - Salem, Hanging Rock and eastern Craig County  
 TEAM E - New River Valley Bird Club - Burkes Garden, Tazewell County  
 TEAM F - Toni Pepin & Linda Cory - Roanoke Valley  
 TEAM G - Lynn & David Williamson - Greenfield area  
 TEAM H - Kent Davis, Barry Whitt - Salem to Shawsville  
 TEAM I - Laurie & Scott Spangler - Botetourt and Bedford Counties  
 TEAM J - Bill & Anne Tucker - Franklin, Pittsylvania and Bedford Counties, around Smith Mountain Lake

## **Volunteers needed for the Spring Fling at Mill Mountain Zoo**

The RVBC is having an activity table at this annual celebration at Mill Mountain Zoo. According to the zoo, Spring Fling is a FREE day at the zoo to celebrate the beginning of spring with "activities related to gardening, birding and other fun things to get you thinking about springtime." The event is on Saturday, March 25th, from 11-4 p.m. Mary Harshfield is coordinating our activity table; if you're able to volunteer for a one or two hour shift, please contact her at [mary.harsh803@gmail.com](mailto:mary.harsh803@gmail.com) or 344-4341. There will be hands on activities and the opportunity to talk to parents about birding activities they can do with their children. Should be fun!



## **RICHMOND AUDUBON SOCIETY TO HOST 2017 VSO ANNUAL MEETING**

We are planning to host a number of field trips to some of our favorite spots. By the first weekend in May, there's a very good chance that the James River Park system will be teeming with many of the migratory species that make their way through our area every spring. You can expect the field trips to touch on a number of our hot spots in the James River Park System in Richmond, which spans some 550 acres right in the heart of the city of Richmond. You can learn more about it by clicking here: <http://jamesriverpark.org/>

Urban birding won't be our only option, either. We have field trip leaders eager to show off the many wonderful spots in the central Virginia area that our members regularly enjoy. We'll have a full list of trips as we get closer to the Annual Meeting. We're also working on a line up of excellent speakers and presenters for the weekend. We are also planning a silent auction. If you have an item that you'd like to donate, please contact me at [president@richmondaudubon.org](mailto:president@richmondaudubon.org). If you are interested in having a vendor table, or know of someone who might be interested, please also contact me at that address.

In the meantime, if you are looking to make your plans for the Annual Meeting, the Wyndham has agreed to a nightly rate of \$124 for a single (including breakfast), or \$134 for a double (including breakfast for two). To make a reservation, call the hotel at (804) 727-1400 or 1-888-444-6553 and identify yourself as a member of the Virginia Society of Ornithology group to get the reduced rate. On behalf of the members of the Richmond Audubon Society, we are looking forward to hosting you in May 2017 and showing off all the wonderful reasons why Richmond is for bird lovers!

Eileen Geller  
President, Richmond Audubon Society



Roanoke Valley Bird Club  
c/o Eleanor Dye  
PO Box 74  
Vinton, VA 24179

2017 Roanoke Valley Bird Club Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships expire August 31st.

Annual Dues	
Individual \$12	_____
Family \$20	_____
Student \$7	_____
Sustaining \$30	_____
Adopt a Bluebird \$15	_____
Additional Contribution	_____
Total Payment	_____
Make check payable to the Roanoke Valley Bird Club c/o Eleanor Dye Box 74 Vinton, VA 24179	