



April 2011 Newsletter

*Celebrating 54 Years
of Birding! 1957-2011*

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Bluebird Monitors

If you signed up to monitor please come to the April meeting to pick up your paperwork.

MARCH MEETING

Avian Rehabilitator and birder, Maureen Eiger took us into the world of wild bird rehabilitation and described what is involved in rehabilitating sick or injured wild birds.

Don't Miss It! Sign Up for Big Spring Day! May 7

Spring birding in the mountains of Virginia is about as good as it gets. Late April through mid-May is an exciting time to see the colorful birds migrating from the tropics to northern breeding grounds. An added bonus, local birds are showing off their bright plumages, setting up territories and pairing up to breed which makes them more active, vocal, and easier to observe.

Big Spring Day is a cooperative event of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and the Lynchburg Bird Club and is held as scheduled regardless of the weather.

Teams start out between 7:00 and 8:00 AM and count all the birds they see in their assigned territories. Most areas require driving with little walking, but a couple of areas require hiking for a few hours. Beginning birders, this is the time to bird with experienced birders who can help with identifications. Your help is needed because with more eyes and ears more birds are likely to be counted.

At noon, all participants gather at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Grounds for lunch and a tally of the birds seen. Bring your own food and drink. After lunch, groups go back and finish their territory, search for a bird reported by another participant, or just call it a day.

We urge you to join us for a fun day of birding. Maybe you'll discover a new birding territory, meet new birders and see a new bird to add to your list.

For this year's Big Spring Day on May 7, contact Eunice Hudgins at 540-389-4056 (uvaau@aol.com) or Pam Wefel at 540-977-0636 (pewefel@aol.com) to sign up. Let us know if you prefer to drive or hike.

NEXT MEETING:

**April 11, 7:00 p.m.
Grandin Court Baptist
Church**

Member Night

Dig up all those wonderful photos, CDs, DVDs, videos, slides of your birding activities this past year. Please email Bill Grant at clarinetman@earthlink.net if you plan to participate and let him know what audio-visual equipment you will need. Plan on approximately 5 minutes for your presentation. Let's have a great show-and-tell this year!

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

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

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN

BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

SHARE THE COST OF GAS WHEN YOU CARPOOL

FIELD TRIPS FOR APRIL AND EARLY MAY

April 23, 7:30 AM, Solitude Area

Meet leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) at Botetourt Commons near the Bojangles. We will bird the area from the James River bridge to Arcadia to Solitude swamp in search of warblers and other neotropical migrants. Limited easy walking except for an optional hill at the James River bridge. A special treat at Solitude: possible prothonotary warblers.

April 30, 7:00 AM, Warbler Road

Meet leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn (719-0109) at Botetourt Commons near the Bojangles. We will be leaving promptly at 7. We will bird a series of forest service roads from just beyond Arcadia all the way up to the Blue Ridge Parkway in search of warblers and other neotropical migrants. We usually bird into the early afternoon so bring drinks, snacks, and a lunch. Dress in layers and be prepared to carpool as there are few places to pull over on this narrow road. This is always a favorite trip for many club members.



May 1, 7:30 AM, Mill Mountain

Meet leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) in front of the Discovery Center on Mill Mountain to search for warblers and other neotropical migrants. Expect easy to moderate walking with some gentle hills. We should also see some great wildflowers. NOTE: THIS IS A SUNDAY TRIP.

May 7, Big Spring Day

See article on front page.

FIELD NOTES

March 12, Claytor Nature Center

21 birders, led by Bill Hunley, hiked about 2 miles through varied habitat at Claytor Nature Center. Highlights included swamp sparrow, red shouldered hawk, purple finch, brown creeper, downy woodpecker and yellow bellied sapsucker. Perhaps best of all, we saw a red tailed hawk doing a courtship display for several minutes, followed closely by an obviously impressed female.

March 26, Bent/Poor Mountain

The morning was cold (low 30s), overcast and damp (snow predicted), but ten birders joined Robin Austin for a fun exploration of a new territory for many of us. In addition to the road to Stoneridge and the Bottom Creek Loop, we spent some time in Robin's yard on Bent Mountain. Birds sighted were: pine siskin, belted kingfisher, American goldfinch, mourning dove, fox sparrow, house and purple finch, eastern towhee, white-throated and chipping sparrow, red-winged blackbird and blue jay. Other birds seen were: red-tailed hawk, dark-eyed junco, Canada goose, American crow, Carolina chickadee, brown thrasher, northern cardinal, tufted titmouse, black and turkey vulture, phoebe, American robin, eastern bluebird, European starling, pileated, red-bellied and downy woodpecker, yellow-rumped and pine warbler, hermit thrush, screech owl, northern flicker, great-blue heron, northern mockingbird and eastern meadowlark. Thank you, Robin, for a fun time on a dreary day.

VSO Events (Details in Feb. RVBC Newsletter.)
Annual Meeting of The Virginia Society Of Ornithology May 13 – 15 in Harrisonburg

Hosted by the Rockingham Bird Club the meeting will feature a banquet, field trips, exhibits, vendors, a technical paper session, and the VSO's annual business meeting. Download registration form from www.rockinghambirdclub.com. Registration deadline is May 1, 2011.

VSO Piney Grove Field Trip, May 28

This is a trip to view nesting red-cockaded woodpeckers. You must be a VSO member and register early. Contact Meredith Bell : 804-824-4958 or merandlee@cox.net

SIGHTINGS

March: A western tanager has been visiting feeders at the home of Bill and Katie James in the Hollins area.

March 13: Rupert Cutler spotted a hermit thrush on the Lick Run Greenway bringing his tally of Lick Run bird species to 84.

March 17: Bill and Katie James spotted an osprey at Carvins Cove.

March 11: Alyce Quinn saw a mixed flock of American robins, red-winged blackbirds (females only) and nine rusty blackbirds feeding in her yard in Burnt Chimney.

March 20: Mike Purdy reported fox sparrows feeding in his yard in Fincastle.

March 26: In Wasena Park near milepost 22, Laurie and Scott Spangler sighted eight yellow-crowned night herons roosting in the trees along the river. One was on a nest and another nest was under construction.

Join the Bird-Smart Wind Campaign

American Bird Conservancy has launched a wind campaign to address the impact of wind farms on bird populations. ABC seeks organizations' endorsements of this campaign. A full spectrum of actions is planned in this campaign. These will include:

- Generating public comments on the draft Interior wind guidelines. Participating on webinars and calls to be informed on developments and to organize an effective bird-smart response to the rapid expansion of wind energy.
- Disseminating bird-smart messaging to other conservation, groups and counteracting misleading/inaccurate wind industry assertions.
- Signing your organization onto a detailed comment letter outlining how bird-smart wind can be advanced by requiring the guidelines be mandatory and by strengthening the proposed guidelines.

By 2030, there will be more than 100,000 wind turbines in the U.S., and these are expected to kill at least one million birds each year—probably significantly more. Wind farms are also expected to impact almost 20,000 square miles of terrestrial bird habitat.

Bird-smart wind power employs careful siting, operational and construction mitigation, and monitoring, as well as compensation to reduce and redress any unavoidable bird mortality and habitat loss from wind energy development. These are issues that should be included in mandatory federal wind standards.

All wind farms should employ bird-smart principles and comply with state and federal wildlife protection laws.

If your organization is interested in participating email Steve Holmer at sholmer@abcbirds.org with your organization's name, city, and state.

http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/collisions/wind_farms

Oldest Known Wild Bird in the U.S. is a New Mother

A Laysan albatross that's at least 60 years old was spotted with a chick at Midway Atoll, a wildlife refuge northwest of Honolulu.

A scientist first banded the seabird in 1956. She was estimated to be at least 5 years old at the time. The albatross is the oldest wild bird documented by the 90-year-old U.S. Geological Survey bird banding program.

She has probably raised 30 to 35 chicks during her life.

Source: The Associated Press

Winter Season Yields Twenty "Book-Breakers"

As records keeper for Augusta Bird Club, I record the significant bird sightings submitted to me by bird club

members and friends. At the end of each season, I send a summary of "book-breakers" to the Audubon Regional Editor. Except for ring-billed gulls, peak counts, the most ever seen in one day in Augusta County, were recorded on the December 18 Christmas Bird Count.

- Cooper's hawk – 9
- Merlin – 3
- Ring-billed gull – 167
- Red-bellied woodpecker – 69
- Tufted titmouse – 182
- White-throated sparrow – 732
- White-crowned sparrow – 374
- Dark-eyed junco – 1695
- Northern cardinal – 344

Other book-breakers include:

- First winter record of ruby-throated hummingbird: Dec 4, Lyndhurst.
- Second winter record of black-and-white warbler: Dec 18, Ft. Defiance.
- Third winter record of mute swan: two seen most often on several ponds near Stuarts Draft from Feb 7 until Feb 24.
- Third winter record of northern goshawk: one, Jan 23, Stuarts Draft.
- Third winter record of northern saw-whet owl: Feb 9,10,15,19, 22, Waynesboro.
- Fifth and sixth winter records of double-crested cormorant: one, Jan 1, and two Jan 2, Waynesboro.
- Sixth winter record of pine warbler: Feb 19, Mt. Solon.
- Third breeding record of bald eagle: pair at nest, at Swoope, Jan 15 and adult on nest on Feb 3. A pair at New Hope on Jan 15.
- First winter nest of red-tailed hawk: adults building nest on Jan 30, at New Hope.
- Nine great blue herons: discovered on Feb 17, at the same rookery on Sanger's Lane where they nested in 2010.

While these are book-breaking winter records, the most significant record was the presence of an immature trumpeter swan. This bird was seen and photographed first on Jan 23, on a pond near Stuarts Draft, and last seen on Feb 26. It was often seen in several ponds with the mute swans. The only previous record of a trumpeter swan in Augusta County was from Dec 2000 until Feb 2001. These birds wore neck bands and were confirmed as part of a release program in Ohio.

Countless experienced birders have compared notes and photographs and the consensus is that this is a free flying, wild trumpeter swan. Before we can add this trumpeter swan to our Augusta County list, the details will be submitted to the Virginia Rare Bird Committee for review.

Yulee Larner

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