



# December 2010

## Newsletter

*Celebrating 53 Years  
of Birding! 1957-2010*

### **NEXT MEETING:**

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December 13, 7:00 p.m.  
Grandin Court Baptist Church

#### **INSIDE:**

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<i>Nominations for 2011 RVBC Board.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Field Trips.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Field Notes.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Sightings.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Seed Sale.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>CBC.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Bird Puzzle.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>VSO Field Trip.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Hosting Birds in Winter.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Club Supporters.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Rusty Blackbird Blitz.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Puzzle Solution.....</i>	<i>5</i>

### **NOVEMBER MEETING**

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Teta Kain of Gloucester presented an entertaining program about the trip she took to Australia with Thelma Dalmas of the Lynchburg Bird Club. From the looks of it, they had a great time!

### **2011 Annual Dues**

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If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please do so right away. This is the last newsletter you will receive! (And if you have already done so, *thank you!*) Please complete the form on the back of the newsletter and send it and your check to Eleanor Dye.

### **Party Time**

In addition to having what looks to be a terrific program in December, we will also be having our annual food fest—er, holiday party. Remember to bring something yummy to share with the rest of the group.

They've tugged at your heartstrings before: those feathered puff-balls who wait patiently nearby as you fill up the feeder on a cold January morning. While we can't deny our winter residents a little sunflower seed and suet, we can still be amazed at how tough these Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, and White-breasted Nuthatches really are. How do such birds manage their energy budgets under winter's challenging conditions when food supplies are limited and energetic demands are great? In an illustrated presentation, Andrew Dolby, Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Mary Washington and current Virginia Society of Ornithology Vice President, will discuss their two-pronged strategy: 1) ensure an adequate energy supply and 2) reduce demand whenever possible. On the supply end, he will cover the foraging benefits gained by flock participation and other major energy management strategies. On the demand side, he will review various energy-saving anatomical, physiological, and behavioral adaptations exhibited by birds that live in cold climates.

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

### **Need A Holiday Gift?**

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Visit our club's website:

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

Go to [www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com) and order a subscription to *Birdwatcher's Digest* and the magazine will donate \$10 to our club. This magazine would make a wonderful gift for someone just beginning to show an interest in birds, as well as for the seasoned birder. Or how about a birdy calendar? Carl Boast has a few more calendars which sell for \$12. The calendar is made up of terrific photographs taken by club members. Contact Carl at 297-7336 or at [carlandlinda@earthlink.net](mailto:carlandlinda@earthlink.net).

## 2011 Officers and Board

In a surprising turn of events, Maureen Eiger, our nominee for president, was having second thoughts about having enough time to devote to the club as its president. At the same time, she became aware that Elly Wefel was having second thoughts about not serving as president for another year. So at the November meeting Maureen declined her nomination and nominated Elly! You just never know what excitement is in store at our meetings. Here's the list of officers and committee chairmen, who also serve as board members, for the upcoming year:

Elly Wefel, President  
Bill Grant, Vice-President, Programs  
Eleanor Dye, Vice-President, Membership  
Candy Andrzejewski, Secretary  
Robin Austin, Treasurer  
Eunice Hudgins and Alyce Quinn, Directors at Large  
Carol Siler, Publications  
Beth Griffin, Field Trips  
Maureen Eiger, Publicity  
Jane Ambrose-Cosby, Refreshments  
Bluebird Trails, Alyce Quinn

## Field Trips

There are no field trips scheduled for this month. Please consider joining us for one or more Christmas Bird Count. Information about all three counts that our club takes part in can be found later in this newsletter.

## Field Notes

Fenwick Mines, November 13. The bird of the day was a red crossbill—in fact, a pair of them! Other birds of note were red-breasted nuthatch, red-shouldered hawk, raven, carolina and black-capped chickadees, brown creeper, winter wren, hermit thrush, fox sparrow, and lots of robins and cedar waxwings.

Smith Mountain Lake State Park, November 20. This joint field trip with the Lynchburg Bird Club yielded over 40 species. The best included green-winged teal, pied-billed grebe, common loon, red-winged blackbird, pine siskin, red-tailed and Cooper's hawks, yellow-bellied sapsucker, brown creeper, both golden-crowned and ruby-crowned kinglets, cedar waxwing, common grackle and all three nuthatches—white-breasted, red-breasted and brown-headed. But for most, the highlight of the trip was a small flock of horned larks in a field just outside the park.

## Sightings

Correction: In last month's newsletter we reported incorrectly that Norris and Janie Ford saw a Wilson's phalarope at Rural Retreat Lake. What they actually saw was a Wilson's snipe.

On November 6 Liz Cole spotted her first ever yard hermit thrush in a berry-filled Washington Hawthorne tree.

Pine siskins and red-breasted nuthatches are being seen all around the area.

Bill Grant reported on a red phalarope that was spotted on Smith Mountain Lake in early October. This is the first time this bird has been seen in Bedford County, and only the fourth record for the state.

Butch Kelly has a northern harrier hanging out at his place in Craig County.

A screech owl has taken up residence in the barn of one of our new members, but unfortunately we failed to get her name! Please forgive us. If you'll let us know who you are, we'll correct our report next month.

## 2010 Seeds for a Song

This year's seed sale brought in about \$9000, giving the club about \$1200 profit. The Board will be looking for a good project the club can use this money for, so if you have any ideas, let us know. Thank you to everyone who bought seed from us this year. And a big thank you to everyone who helped out during the sale: Allen and Robin Austin, Michael Belcher, Eleanor Dye, Maureen Eiger, Janie and Norris Ford, Eunice Hudgins, Larry Hutson, Tim and Alyce Quinn, Bob Rummel, Laurie Spangler, Zach Thompson and Pam Wefel. Congratulations to Ella Jones, the winner of a year's membership in the club. Welcome, Ella!

## 2010 Christmas Bird Counts

Do we really count birds? Yes, we count every bird seen or heard in one calendar day during the period December 14 through January 5. Christmas bird counts have been done since 1900. Data collected allows researchers, conservation biologists and interested individuals to study the long-term health of bird populations around the world.

Small groups of volunteers drive around their assigned territories by car, stopping frequently to observe and listen for birds. If you are a new birder, or feel uneasy about identifying birds, please know that there will be an experienced birder in each group. It's a fun way to enjoy winter birding.

At our November meeting, the Roanoke Valley Bird Club voted to reinstate the Roanoke Christmas Bird Count

(CBC) as an official Audubon count. We also voted that the \$5 fee per person required for all counters be paid for by the club. These fees fund the CBC program and help to cover costs of generating materials for compilers, producing an annual CBC summary issue, and maintaining the CBC website and database. It was recommended at the meeting that any participant who would like to help cover this fee make a comparable donation to the club.

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club conducts three counts. Participate in one or all three - your help is needed and appreciated:

Roanoke – December 18 – contact Bill Hunley (774-2397 or [whunley@mbc.edu](mailto:whunley@mbc.edu)) for an assigned territory. This is an official Audubon count. The \$5 fee per person will be paid by the RVBC, but anyone who prefers to help defray the cost by paying their own fee may give it to Bill along with their tally sheet.

Fincastle – December 19 – contact Eunice Hudgins (389-4056 or [uvaau@aol.com](mailto:uvaau@aol.com)) or Barry Kinzie (992-2743 or [peckerridge@ntelos.net](mailto:peckerridge@ntelos.net)). This is an official Audubon count with a \$5 fee per person, and each participant is responsible for paying their own fee. There will be homemade soup at noon at Barry’s home followed by tallies of the Roanoke and Fincastle counts.

Peaks of Otter – December 21 – Meet at the Peaks of Otter Lodge for breakfast at 7 AM. Barry Kinzie will set up teams depending on how many show up. If you cannot make the breakfast, please contact Barry (992-2743 or [peckerridge@ntelos.net](mailto:peckerridge@ntelos.net)) ahead of time. Groups will meet back at the Lodge at noon for a tally and lunch. You don’t see great numbers of birds on this count, but it’s a lot of fun. There is no fee associated with this count.

(Below are a few additional comments from Teta Kain, who compiles all the CBC results for an article in *The Raven*, a Virginia Society of Ornithology publication.)

“All paying participants on the Audubon Christmas counts receive a copy of the Christmas Bird Count edition of *American Birds*. Fees also go towards providing compilers with the materials necessary to enter their data into the Audubon Christmas count website, and everything possible is done to keep costs to a minimum. Audubon has not raised the count fee for 20 years, even in the face of rising costs of printing, website management, and overhead expenses. When you consider that they employ only one person full time to manage, oversee, and edit more than 2100 counts that are conducted each year, I think \$5.00/count is a fair price to pay for the services rendered and for the privilege of being part of one of the largest and longest bird census in the world.

“All persons under 18 years of age and feeder watchers DO NOT have to pay the \$5.00. As to the fee for multiple

counts, Audubon now says that anyone participating on more than four counts will not have to pay more than \$20. In other words, you pay for the first four counts, after than you don’t have to pay.”

### By Definition Bird Puzzle

Each bird name below fits a clue in the opposite column. Match them up by writing the numbers in the blank spaces. Answers can be found later in this newsletter.



___ Albatross	1 Speedy
B___ Bunting	2 Complain
C___ Cardinal	3 Imitate
A___ Albatross	4 Wearisome burden
B___ Bunting	5 Shrink back in fear
C___ Cardinal	6 Talk
D___ Chat	7 Ladlelike utensil
E___ Coot	8 Two on a par 4
F___ Crane	9 Patriotic drapery
G___ Crow	10 Peddle wares
H___ Darter	11 Child’s toy
L___ Dipper	12 Straw hat
J___ Duck	13 Believe, naively
K___ Eagle	14 Swindle
L___ Goose	15 Paramount
M___ Grouse	16 Brag
N___ Hawk	17 Quick mover
O___ Kite	18 Geezer
P___ Nutcracker	19 One easily duped
Q___ Parrot	20 Dodge, as duties
R___ Pigeon	21 Silly one
S___ Quail	22 Hoisting machine
T___ Rail	23 Shell-break-ing tool
U___ Rook	24 Failure
V___ Skimmer	25 Criticize sneakily
W___ Snipe	26 Rant or scold
X___ Swallow	
Y___ Swift	
Z___ Turkey	

Puzzle courtesy of the book *Bird Brain-Teasers* by Patrick Merrell, Storey Publishing, LLC, 2009

## VSO Winter Field Trip

### **North Carolina Outer Banks, February 11-13, 2010**

The Outer Banks of North Carolina always holds surprises for participants of the VSO's Winter field trip. Back by popular demand is an optional Friday pelagic trip out of Hatteras and a Sunday visit to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

**Lodging:** The Comfort Inn at Kill Devil Hills will be the trip headquarters. The special VSO room rate is \$65 for oceanfront and \$60 for streetside plus tax (currently 12%). Oceanfront rooms are available on a first come, first served basis. Contact information for the hotel is: 1601 S. Virginia Dare Trail, P.O. Box 308, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27949; Phone: 252-441-6333; fax 252-441-7779. Reservations must be made by January 14 to get the special VSO rate.

**Meals** are on your own. A complimentary breakfast buffet breakfast is now included with your stay, beginning each morning at 6:30 AM. Participants should bring lunch provisions for Saturday. For dinner there are many fine restaurants in the area.

**Program:** A program of events and announcements will be available at the front desk on Friday morning.

**Friday:** Optional Pelagic Trip with Brian Patteson. This is NOT an exclusive trip for VSO, so make your reservations early to ensure a spot. The minimum number of participants required for the trip is 10 (maximum of 20), and the special rate is \$150 per person. In case of inclement weather on Friday, participants will be able to reschedule for Brian's regular trip on Saturday or his Sunday weather date depending on available space. The trip will begin at 6:00 AM at either Hatteras, NC or Wanchese, NC. (Directions will be sent with trip confirmation.) To register, contact Brian Patteson at [patteson1@embarqmail.com](mailto:patteson1@embarqmail.com) or by mail, and send your payment of \$150, (checks made payable to Brian Patteson, Inc.) to Brian Patteson, P.O. Box 772, Hatteras, NC 27943.

**Friday Night:** An evening orientation and slide program will be presented at 8:30 PM in the conference room near the lobby.

**Saturday:** All day will be spent visiting the impoundments of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The generally milder climate and the proximity of the Gulf Stream make for an interesting combination of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, ocean birds and sometimes whales. Participants may be divided into smaller groups, but every group will visit all areas. Participants should bring lunch.

**Saturday Evening:** There will be a tally at 6:00 PM in the VSO conference room at the hotel.

**Sunday Morning:** We'll travel in caravan to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. The trip will depart from the hotel at 8:00 AM, giving those wishing to continue straight home from the field trip time to check out of their rooms.

Come prepared for variable weather, lots of birds and a good time. If you have any questions, contact Bill Akers at 540-951-7692 or [bill.akersj@comcast.net](mailto:bill.akersj@comcast.net) or Meredith Bell at 804-824-4958 or [merandlee@cox.net](mailto:merandlee@cox.net).

## Hosting Birds in Winter

Remember your feathered friends this winter and give them an extra hand by doing the following:

- Clean and fill your birdbath on a regular basis. We live in an area where temperatures freeze water so using a birdbath heater is a simple way to keep water accessible. You might be rewarded with lots of visiting birds that you would not normally see.
- Create a cozy winter home for birds. Clean out your existing nest boxes or provide a warm winter roosting box (hole is on the bottom). Also, evidence shows roosting birds prefer winter homes placed up high, about 10 feet or more, so while your bird box may be in the best location to nest in spring, it might not be a good location for them in winter. So add some more nest boxes or roosting boxes on your property.
- Put out soaked raisins or fruit (oranges, apples, grapes) for extra "moist" food for the birds. Freeze your fall pokeberries and offer them in the dead of winter.
- If you don't have room for a seed feeder because of your "location" or cost, try a suet feeder. Less mess than seed feeders and it will attract lots of birds.
- Don't forget to keep your feeders clean. Even though it's cold outside, bacteria and viruses can still live and be transmitted at and under your feeders.
- A small pile of twigs next to a tree is a favorite place for wrens, nuthatches, chickadees and other birds to look for bugs that are hiding. Throw seeds into the twig pile or under bushes so they can forage under cover. (Not a good idea though if you have neighborhood cats that can hide there)
- Start a compost pile of needles, pinecones and wreaths made from natural materials from your holiday decorations to provide additional cover for wildlife. Place your old holiday tree in a secluded part of your yard for wildlife to use as shelter from harsh weather.
- Most of all -enjoy watching your birds appreciating the feast you've put out for them!

—Maureen Eiger

**Help the Wildlife Care Alliance (WCA)** with sick or injured birds this winter by bringing a roll of paper towels or box of tissues to the next club meeting. WCA still gets a fair amount of cat caught birds; window hit birds and birds with other injuries or illnesses during the winter months. So please help your feathered friends by making a tax deductible donation or bring some paper goods to the meeting. If you have any sick / injured bird questions you can call (540)342-4890 and talk to our RVBC member Maureen Eiger who is a Federal and State licensed migratory bird rehabilitator and a board member of the Wildlife Care Alliance.



### Club Supporters

Many of our club members make extra contributions above and beyond paying their yearly dues. We would like to recognize and thank all of them here.

Those who have made contributions to the Club are: Bill Hunley, Bill and Katie James, Susan Kidd, Billy Joe Riggins, Virginia Shields, Bill and Kathy Von Appen and Carol Whiteside.

Sustaining members are: Jane Ambrose-Cosby, Sabrina Garvin and Blanche Hawks.

“Adopt-a-Bluebird” supporters are: Laurie Greer, Susan Kidd and Marion Slater.

### Rusty Blackbird Blitz

The Rusty Blackbird is one of the fastest declining North American passerines and as such is the focus of the recently formed International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group. In 2009 and 2010, the Group organized the volunteer-based Blitz to document occurrences of the species across its wintering range, including Virginia. The Blitz is being repeated for a *third and final time* in 2011.

This final year of data collection will round out the effort of the first two years by expanding coverage of past Blitzes, locating additional sites occupied by Rusty Blackbirds, and providing additional data on the stability of these sites across years. In 2011, the Blitz will be held Jan 29 - Feb 13, during which time the blackbirds are easier to find as males sing and the population is relatively sedentary. During this period, volunteers will search for the birds in any locations and habitats that are potentially suitable for wintering Rusty Blackbirds, particularly flocks or concentrations (e.g., dozens or even hundreds of birds). Volunteers who participated in 2009 and/or 2010 are also encouraged to revisit sites where they documented the species to collect data on consistency of use of these sites between years.

You can rely on your database of previous sightings, birding intuition, or local knowledge to search the most likely places for wintering Rusty Blackbirds. Christmas Bird Count information also indicates geographic areas where Rusty Blackbirds have been detected, as well as areas that historically have lacked in coverage. *We recommend that you coordinate with other potential Blitz participants in your area to increase geographic coverage, especially if you belong to a bird club or Audubon Society chapter.* You may search wherever you like, whenever you like, and as often as you like during the Blitz period. You will be collecting basic information on areas of occurrence (and, equally important, non-occurrence) and flock sizes. We ask that you submit your observations through Virginia eBird, so that they may be analyzed together with eBird Blitz observations from other states. If you are not already registered to eBird, this is a great opportunity to join. Signing up and using eBird is very easy, and you can find instructions on how to do so at the Virginia eBird site at <http://ebird.org/content/va>.

### Answers to By Definition Bird Puzzle

A: 4	J: 20	S: 5
B: 9	K: 8	T: 26
C: 15	L: 21	U: 14
D: 6	M: 2	V: 12
E: 18	N: 10	W: 25
F: 22	O: 11	X: 13
G: 16	P: 23	Y: 1
H: 17	Q: 3	Z: 24
I: 7	R: 19	



