



April 2008 Newsletter

*Celebrating 51 Years
of Birding! 1957-2008*

INSIDE:

<i>RVBC Annual Picnic, August 17.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Field Trips.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Big Spring Day.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Field Notes.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Sightings.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>To See Every Bird On Earth.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Red-cockaded Woodpecker Benefit from Conservation Incentives.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Nightjar Survey Network.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Save the Red Knot... </i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Lights Off!.....</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Some Bird Species Already Nesting.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Internet Sites of Interest.....</i>	<i>5</i>

MARCH MEETING

An educator, writer, and conservationist, Bruce Ingram has purchased 486 acres of land with the earnings from his books and articles. He has placed a large portion of this land under conservation easement.

Bruce's goal is to create habitat beneficial to wildlife. He recommends selective tree cutting to encourage optimum oak growth for abundant acorn crops, and planting native grasses to provide seed and cover for birds.

Bruce has found the Virginia Department of Forestry to be a good resource for information and assistance with land management: <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/index.shtml>.

Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival May 16-18 and VSO Annual Meeting

The joint meeting and festival will take place at the Mountain Lake Hotel in Giles County. There are many excellent field trips to choose from over the three days.

Ian Sinclair, a prolific writer and Africa's foremost birder will be the keynote speaker on Friday night. The hotel is providing special rates on all accommodations and

NEXT MEETING:

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

APRIL MEETING

Sam and Liz Williams recently returned from Africa and will present *Backyard Birding in Kenya*.

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

meals are included for hotel guests. There are also motels available in the surrounding area. All field trips will leave from the hotel and buses will be provided for many of the trips.

Advance registration is necessary for the field trips. Registration can be done online: www.mountainlakebirding.com. For more information contact Peggy Opengari at 540-921-4340.

Please contact Alyce Quinn (540-719-0109) for carpooling info and if you wish to find someone to share a room.

New Members

Please welcome to the club: Joy Greer of Roanoke; Gloria Parry of Blacksburg; Scott & Janet Rathbun of Roanoke; and George Blonar of Roanoke.

Donate to Our Book Table

Our used book table is a nice money maker for the club. If you have a book you would like to pass on to another (birds, flowers, butterflies, wildlife, etc.) please consider donating it to the table. No prices are put on the books. Buyers pay whatever they feel the book is worth.

RVBC Annual Picnic, August 17

Mark your calendars now for our Club picnic. Pam and Elly Wefel will host the gathering at Walrond Park, 6824 Walrond Drive off of Plantation Road from 4-9 P.M.

FIELD TRIPS

CHAIRMAN BETH GRIFFIN 265-4853

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

April 5, 8:00 A.M. Salisbury Furnace

Bill Hunley (774-2397) will lead us on a search for early spring migrants in the Eagle Rock area. Expect some easy walking. Meet near the Bojangles at Botetourt Commons off 220N just off exit 150B on Interstate 81.

April 12, 7:30 A.M. Lick Run Greenway

Club member Rupert Cutler has been birding the Lick Run Greenway in the heart of Roanoke since it opened over a year ago. He led a successful field trip there last November and we've invited him to do it again during spring migration. Expect about 2 miles of easy walking, more if you're so inclined. To get there, take the Orange Avenue West exit off 581 then take the first right onto Burrell Street. Enter the first turn-off on the left into a parking lot. If you pass the pool, you've gone too far.

April 19, 8:30 A.M. Bent Mountain/Poor Mountain

Leaders Robin and Allen Austin (929-9071) will meet us at Bent Mountain Elementary School to search for high elevation migrants. (There is good birding in the marshy area behind the school if you want to arrive early). Around noon, we will finish up our birding and go to the Austins' house for a pot luck lunch. They will provide hamburgers and hot dogs, everyone else should bring something to share. Expect limited walking.

April 26, 7:00 A.M. Warbler Road

Meet leaders Tim and Alyce Quinn (719-0109) near the Bojangles at Botetourt Commons off 220N just off exit 150B on Interstate 81. Dress in layers and bring plenty of food and drinks for an all day trip. **Most importantly, come prepared to carpool as there are very limited spaces to pull over on this trip.** Very limited walking.

May 4, Sunday, 8:00 A.M. Mill Mountain

Meet leader Bill Hunley (774-2397) in front of the Discovery Center on Mill Mountain. You will be amazed how many migrants you can see atop this mountain. Expect 1 to 1.5 miles of easy walking.

May 10, 8 A.M. Booker T. Washington National Monument



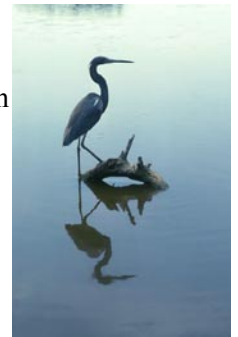
Bill and Anne Tucker will lead this walk. A carpool will leave from underneath the big Tanglewood Mall sign on Electric Rd. at 7 A.M.

To get to the Monument, go south on Hwy 220. Turn left at Wirtz Road (there is a stoplight and the Plateau Plaza at that intersection). Travel Wirtz Rd. until it ends at Hwy 122. Turn left and drive several miles to the Monument.

Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge May 16-19

Beth Griffin (265-4853) and other club members are birding the eastern shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge And Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge May 16 -19.

Anyone who is interested in joining us should call Beth Griffin ASAP as hotels are filling up.



May 3, Big Spring Day

Remember the old Christmas song, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year?" Well, for me, that time doesn't come in the winter but in the spring. Along about mid-February I start counting down the days till our Neotropical migrants come back. Some species we see only for a brief couple of weeks; others stay in our part of the country to raise families.

Around here, late April through mid-May is the best time to see these migrants, as well as those birds that spend the entire year here. They've all gotten their bright summer plumages back, they're setting up territories (and advertising the fact very vocally), and they're pairing up to breed. All this makes them more active and more easily observed.



Every spring at the height of this migration, our club teams up with the Lynchburg Bird Club to do a census of birds in our area. We call it Big Spring Day. The count is centered around the Peaks of Otter, and specific territories within a 7 ½ mile radius of the Peaks are covered every year. Historical records can then be used to determine trends in bird populations over the years.

Most territories can be covered from your car and include very little or no walking, but there are a couple of territories that require hiking for several hours. Most groups start out between 7 and 8:00 in the morning. Never fear—you don't have to be an expert to participate. We do try to include at least one experienced birder on every territory, but beginners can help pick up birds even if they can't identify all the species they are seeing. The more eyes and ears we have out there, the more birds we will find.

At noon, all participants gather at the Peaks of Otter Picnic Grounds for lunch and a tally of what was seen. Everyone brings their own food and drink, and we get to catch up with people we haven't seen since the last Big Spring Day. After lunch, groups that didn't have enough time to finish up their territories head back out for a while. Others might choose to go in search of a specific rarity reported by another participant. The rest of us just call it a day and head home. All of us think about what a fun time we had and how glad we are it's finally spring.



Let us know if you prefer to drive or hike, and whether you feel comfortable identifying species yourself or just want to tag along with others more experienced than yourself.

If you would like to join us for this year's Big Spring Day on May 3, there will be a sign-up sheet at the April 14 club meeting. You can also contact Eunice Hudgins at 389-4056 or uvaau@aol.com, or Alyce Quinn at 719-0109 or twoquinns@yahoo.com to sign up. Please do so by April 19 so we'll have time to get you on a territory. Let us know if you prefer to drive or hike, and whether you feel comfortable identifying species yourself or just want to tag along with other more experienced birders.

Hope we see you there. And have a happy spring, everyone!

Alyce Quinn

FIELD NOTES

Woodcock Courtship Displays

Our Club joined the Lynchburg Bird Club at the Buffalo Creek Nature Area and had very good views of the Woodcocks' courtship displays.

Locher Tract, April 22

On a mild sunny day, Bill Hunley led a group of twelve to the Locher Tract area along the James River in Rockbridge County. (Rt. 11S to Rt. 130E, right on Rt. 759, then left

on Rt. 782.) The site of an old family farm, the US Forest Service now maintains the area for wildlife watching. It was an easy one mile walk along the James River past a grassy opening through piney woods and around an active beaver swamp. The group continued to bird several miles along the river by car.

Species sighted: Double-crested Cormorant, Eastern Meadowlark, Belted Kingfisher, Wood Duck, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Tree Swallow, Field Sparrow, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Flicker, Blue Jay, Dark-eyed Junco, Carolina Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, Canada goose, rock pigeon, Mourning Dove, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Bluebird, European Starling, Eastern Towhee, White-throated Sparrow, Song Sparrow, American Goldfinch, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Northern Cardinal, Fish Crow, Common Crow, Black Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk, and Turkey Vulture.

SIGHTINGS

On Feb 29, Mike Purdy visited Carvins Cove and sighted: Merlin, 1; Bald Eagle, 1; Horned Grebe, 2; Ring-billed Gull, 165; and Herring Gull, 1. At Murray's Pond Mike sighted: Bufflehead, 14; Green-winged Teal, 4; Gadwall, 16; Mallard, 2; and Canada Goose, 20. At Greenfield Lake at Botetourt: Green-winged Teal, 28; Lesser Scaup, 8; American Wigeon, 4; Hooded Merganser, 4; Wilson's Snipe, 3; Killdeer, 6; and Red-tailed Hawk, 1. At Layman's Pond: Canada Goose, 65; Lesser Scaup, 8; American Wigeon, 4; Hooded Merganser, 4; Wilson's Snipe, 3; Killdeer, 6; Red-tailed Hawk, 1; and Canada Goose, 65.

In early March Mary Lou Agee spotted 16 Common Grackles in her yard.

Also in early March Jane Ambrose-Cosby saw three Cedar Waxwings on her property.

Joe Riggins sighted an Osprey near the Roanoke River in Salem in early March.

Elly and Pam Wefel have had Pine Siskins at their feeders, sometimes 100+, for the past 5-6 weeks.

On March 14th Bill James saw an Osprey in the Hollins area.

Mike Purdy spotted an adult Bald Eagle on March 16 at the intersection of Peters Creek Rd. and Woodhaven Rd. It was flying low and heading SSW.

On March 17th, Bob and Andy Biggs spotted two Wood Ducks in a walnut tree at the edge of their yard in Daleville.

Alyce and Tim Quinn recently sighted Woodcocks near their home.

To See Every Bird On Earth: A Father, A Son, And a Lifelong Obsession

Nancy and Bob Luce recommend this 10.25 hour audio book (9 CDs) for those long car rides to your next birding destination. (May be available at your local library.)

Ostensibly about birds and birdwatching, this enormously appealing book by Dan Koeppel is a memoir by a talented writer whose father happened to be in the elite cadre of major birders. Dan Koeppel's father has tallied more than 7,000 species. Koeppel includes his own travels tagging along and provides brief profiles of other eccentric listers.

Endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers Benefit from Conservation Programs



Safe Harbor lands—land that landowners make habitable for endangered species but still allow the landowner to develop the land—are providing valuable habitat for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. More than one-third of the woodpeckers are on Safe Harbor properties. Landowners in nine southeastern states are managing several hundred thousand acres to benefit the species.

Listed as endangered in 1970 following the loss of more than 90% of the bird's longleaf forest habitat, private landowner support is necessary for recovery of the woodpecker. The northernmost red-cockaded woodpeckers are at The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve in Virginia. The TNC is the holder of a Safe Harbor Agreement that includes the preserve, where the population numbers between 27 and 30 birds. Last fall, a new female bird was sighted in a group that had lost its breeding female. A legband revealed that she was banded in Tyrell County, North Carolina in 2006. If she stays at Piney Grove, she could provide valuable genetic diversity for the Virginia population.

Near Bainbridge, Georgia woodpecker numbers have increased at the Southlands Experimental Forest, the site of a conservation bank established by the International Paper Company in 1999. At that time, only three woodpeckers were at Southlands, now there are 20 woodpecker groups (groups are the standard counting measure for this woodpecker which live in cooperative colonies). The State of Georgia recently announced that it would purchase Southlands Experimental Forest from International Paper to help ensure the Red-cockaded Woodpecker population.

Source: Environmental Defense Fund Website <http://www.edf.org>

Save The Red Knot

The Red Knot is a small, short-legged shorebird with a rich, robin-red breast in breeding plumage. The Red Knot, *rufa* subspecies, migrates 18,000 miles each year from its winter home in Argentina to the tundra of North America, where it nests—and back.

Rufa Red Knots fly up the east coast of the United States in the spring and stop to rest and refuel. Knots arrive at the Delaware Bay just as horseshoe crabs are spawning to feast on the crab eggs in preparation for the last leg of their migration.

In recent years, horseshoe crab numbers in Delaware Bay have been severely depleted by commercial fishermen who sell the crabs for use as bait. With fewer horseshoe crabs laying eggs, migrating knots are deprived of their major food source and are unable to gain the strength they need to finish their migration. Birds that do complete the journey often arrive at their breeding grounds weak, undernourished, and less likely to reproduce.

The *rufa* Red Knot has declined from a high of more than 100,000 birds in the 1980s to fewer than 15,000 today. Scientists warn that unless this trend is reversed, the birds could become extinct as early as 2010.

On March 18, the New Jersey Senate approved a measure to ban the harvest of horseshoe crabs in an effort to help the recovery of the Red Knot. Conserving horseshoe crabs gives the Red Knot a chance to rebound. Let's hope the legislation is not too late.

For more information visit the American Bird Conservancy website: <http://www.abcbirds.org/>

Nightjar Survey Network

Interested in participating in The Center for Conservation Biology's Nightjar Survey Network? The Center needs volunteers to adopt and conduct survey routes to collect data on the population distribution and trends of Nightjars: Common Nighthawk, Whip-poor-will, Chuck-will's Widow, Common Poorwill, Lesser Nighthawk, Antillean Nighthawk, Buff-collared Nightjar, and Common Pauraque across the United States. The Network was first introduced into the southeast and is being expanded in 2008 to provide coverage throughout the contiguous United States.



Volunteers conduct roadside counts at night, during times when the moon is > 50 % illuminated, by stopping at 10 points along a predetermined 9-mile route. At each point, the observer counts all Nightjars seen or heard during a 6-minute period. No artificial broadcasts of the species' calls are used. Please visit the United States Nightjar Survey Website (www.ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm) for details.

Lights Off!



At night artificial light is a danger to migrating birds, making them prone to colliding into buildings and homes, particularly during cloudy or foggy conditions. Birds become disoriented by the false horizon created by artificial light and will fly towards backlit windows in an attempt to correct their flight. In a recent study, 1,297

birds died after hitting a 90-foot illuminated building in Chicago during a two-year period. In that same area, an unlit structure claimed 192 birds during the study period. (Chicago has recently adopted a "Lights Out" program.)

Solution? Turn It Off!

Turn off as many exterior and interior lights as possible during the peak migration hours of midnight to dawn. Encourage your neighbors to do the same. If you work in a high rise, contact building management and let them know about the dangers of illuminated buildings at night.

Direct Light Where Needed

Outfit exterior lights with top and side shields to reduce upward and sideways illumination. Shields will direct light downward where it is needed.

Some Bird Species Already Nesting

Most of the birds that breed in Augusta County build their nests beginning in April, a good number start nesting in March, and a few build their nests in February. Recently I had a report of a pair of Common Ravens carrying nest material to a nest site on February 3, 2008. This is the earliest documented nest building record in our database.



Both male and female birds helped in the construction of the nest, and now only one bird is active, so the assumption is that the female is sitting on eggs. Since their nest is deep, she is down so low that observers cannot see her head.

We had one record of a raven nest with eggs on February 28, 1988, which is a little later than the current record. It was located on a ledge in a quarry on Statler Boulevard in Staunton. One of the most unusual

Augusta County nests was built on the ledge of a rock crusher at the Luck's Quarry near Franks Mill years ago. The nest "rocked" every time the crusher was operating!

The most reliable location to find ravens nesting is on a tower on VA 610, the road that runs parallel to the Blue Ridge Parkway, south about five miles from its entrance on Afton Mountain. Birders have observed these nests for a number of years.

Ravens are not the only birds to nest early. We have a record of a pair of Common Crows building a nest in Staunton on February 21, 2005. a Mourning Dove nest with eggs on February 28, 1986 in Waynesboro, and House Sparrows nest building on February 16, 2004 in Staunton.

Now that March is here, more and more species will be building their nests. But, even in March, there could be snow and wintry conditions. In my back yard I once saw a robin sitting on her nest in a shrub, with snow piled up on her back!

Another species, the Horned Lark, nests in March; its nest is a depression in the ground, lined with grasses. In Waynesboro, on March 21 1970, a Horned Lark sitting on her nest was seen, covered with snow.

These are the unusual winter and early spring nest records in our Augusta County database The pair of ravens nest building on February 3, 2008, is the earliest on record.

Yulee Larner

Reprinted from the Staunton News Leader

Internet Sites of Interest:

Roanoke Birds listserv:
<http://groups.google.com/group/roanokebirds>

New River Birds listserv:
<http://groups.google.com/group/NRVBirds>

Franklin, Henry, and Patrick Counties Birds listserv:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fhpbirds/>

Virginia Society of Ornithology:
<http://www.virginiabirds.net/>

American Bird Conservancy:
<http://www.abcbirds.org/>

BirdSource:
<http://www.birdsource.org/>

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology:
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/>

National Wildlife Federation:
<http://www.nwf.org/>

National Audubon Society:
<http://www.audubon.org/>

American Birding Association:
<http://www.americanbirding.org/>

Environmental Defense Fund:
<http://www.edf.org>

Virginia Bluebird Society:
<http://www.virginiabluebirds.org/index.html>

North American Bluebird Society:
<http://www.nabluebirdsociety.org/index.htm>

Virginia Native Plant Society:
<http://www.vnps.org>

birding.about.com - a general guide to birding:
<http://birding.about.com/>
www.theaviary.com: <http://www.theaviary.com/bi.shtml>
<http://mountainnaturalist.blogspot.com/>

If there are any birding/nature sites you would like to see listed in the newsletter please email cesiler@yahoo.com



ROANOKE VALLEY BIRD CLUB 2008 OFFICERS

President: Elly Wefel 977-0636
VP (Programs) Bill Grant 389-3294
VP (Membership): Eleanor Dye 890-1627
Treasurer: Eunice Hudgins 389-4056
Secretary: Connie Marsh 334-7094
Field Trips: Beth Griffin 265-4853
Directors at Large: Alyce Quinn and Bob Miller
Publications: Carol Siler 725-1609
Website: <http://roanokebird.tripod.com>

2008 Membership Dues

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **ST:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail To: Roanoke Valley Bird Club
c/o Eunice Hudgins, Treasurer
870 Stonegate Court, Salem VA 24153-6810

Dues

Individual **\$12** _____

Family **\$20** _____

Student **\$7** _____

Sustaining **\$30** _____

Adopt-a-BlueBird **\$15** _____

Additional
Contribution **\$** _____

Total Submitted **\$** _____