

VSO Newsletter

A publication of The Virginia Society of Ornithology



VSO Holds Annual Meeting in Farmville

The 2010 VSO Annual Meeting was held April 23-25 in Farmville, an historic college town centered in the Southside region of Virginia. Sponsored by the Margaret H. Watson Bird Club, the meeting attracted over 100 birders from around the Commonwealth for a weekend filled with great birds, fellowship, and fun.

The event began with early check-in Friday afternoon at the Sunchase lounge where exhibitors were set up and meeting registrants were able to shop among the offerings of Rudy Burnett, bird carver, and Joe Lively's Time Traveler Books, as well as view informational displays provided by Virginia Audubon, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, High Bridge Trail State Park, the Shenandoah Mountain Conservancy, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology. About thirty early arrivers joined the field trip to Wilck's Lake, a park within Farmville's town limits, and spent two hours exploring this little jewel of a park with Ted Floyd, the annual meeting banquet speaker. Forty-two species of birds were observed including great looks at several Spotted Sandpipers and close-up encounters with at least two pairs of nesting Prothonotary Warblers. A large King Snake coiled on the side of the trail afforded a nice photo opportunity. Andrew Dolby, VSO Vice President, presided at the evening business meeting in lieu of Rexanne Bruno, VSO President, who was stuck in Romania as a result of the Icelandic volcano. The slate of officers and board members proposed by the nominating committee (see sidebar) was adopted by the membership. All three incoming board members were present

and were acknowledged for offering to serve.

After the business meeting, the Margaret Watson Bird Club presented a preview of the weekend field trips, followed by a brief nocturnal expedition to Briery Creek Lake Wildlife Management Area. Those who braved the dark and damp were treated to calling Barred Owls, Whip-poor-wills, and American Woodcock. When the moon peeked through the clouds, Field and White-throated Sparrows sang briefly. A loud chorus of bullfrogs provided background music. On Saturday morning, field trips departed for local birding hotspots that highlighted

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Summer 2010

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<http://ebird.org/content/va/>

Va-Bird Listserve
<http://mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/va-bird>

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Dates to Remember

SEPTEMBER 10 – 12, 2010
CHINCOTEAGUE TRIP

DECEMBER 3 – 5, 2010
VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP

2010 VSO Election Results

Officers

President – Rexanne Bruno
Past President – David Spears
Vice President – Andrew Dolby
Secretary – Alyce Quinn
Treasurer – Sue Thrasher
Membership Secretary – Thelma Dalmas
Newsletter Editors – Linda Fields and
Alan Schreck
Raven Editor – Wes Brown

Board of Directors

Terms Ending 2013

Elisa Enders, Portsmouth
David Hannah, Charlottesville, and
Larry Meade, Vienna.



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President's Message: Breeding Bird Atlas

Summer 2010



If you attended the VSO Annual Meeting held in Farmville the last weekend in April you will know that I missed it. Instead I was doing some unexpected birding in Bucharest, Romania where I was stranded due to the airport closures across Europe related to the volcano eruption in Iceland. I understand that Andrew Dolby, VSO Vice President, did a terrific job taking over my duties at the meeting despite learning of these added responsibilities at the very last minute. Thanks so much Andrew for filling in for me. I also heard that it was a great annual meeting. I promise not to miss next year's event in Harrisonburg and I hope you won't either. Though I missed the annual meeting I didn't miss spring migration. I witnessed it on a river cruise down the Danube through Eastern Europe. The most unexpected spring migrant (and life bird) that I saw there was a Black Stork. This stork is shyer than

the more common (European) White Stork and builds its nest in swampy forests instead of on roof tops. It also tends to migrate later than the White Storks, which were already arriving and settling on their nests. So I was pleasantly surprised to see this Black Stork standing near the river bank as we cruised through Bulgaria. It was a truly spectacular bird – black with a white belly and bright red legs and bill.

By the time you receive this newsletter Virginia's spring migration will be over and the breeding season will be well underway. Some birders slow down during the summer but others are out there helping with local breeding bird counts, the VSO foray, and coastal surveys of breeding gulls, terns, and shorebirds. In a similar mode in the late 1980s many VSO members volunteered to help with the first Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. Their efforts were published in 2001 by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries as the *Breeding Bird Atlas of Virginia, 1985-1989*. Unfortunately, this book is out-of-print and even if it was still available it is probable that the distribution of many of our breeding birds has changed in the ensuing twenty-plus years.

Since I became president, several people have spoken with me about working on a new Breeding Bird Atlas for Virginia. A new BBA would not only give us more current information on where species breed in Virginia but it would also indicate how the distribution of these species has changed over time. This breeding information is of great interest to Virginia birders and it is invaluable to conservation organizations and govern-

ment agencies trying to protect critical habitat and make development and land management decisions.

For the first Breeding Bird Atlas, the state was divided into 7.5-minute topographic quadrangle blocks which were further divided into six equal rectangles. Volunteers completely surveyed at least one rectangle in each block, observing the breeding status of the species there. Species were recorded in one of several categories: observed only, if observed during breeding season but without any evidence of breeding; possible breeder if observed in suitable habitat during breeding season but without breeding-related activity; probable breeder if observed conducting courtship or copulation; or confirmed breeder for observations of adults carrying food or fecal sacs, occupied nests or young. Over the five-year survey period, volunteers returned to their blocks, attempting to upgrade the breeding status of a species by possibly observing a higher degree of evidence.

I didn't move to Virginia until the late 1990s and have never participated in a breeding bird atlas project. So I have been learning about breeding bird atlas projects and discussing a second generation atlas in Virginia with individuals at some institutions and agencies in the state. I am learning that this is a huge undertaking requiring a lot of advanced planning, organizing, and funding. We are exploring the possibility of starting such a project in another year or two.

What can you do to help? Right now, if you know of any organizations, foundations, corporations, individuals, etc. that we should contact about financial donations, please let me know. Even if it is one that seems obvious, we may not have thought to include them. We are especially interested in any entity that might use breeding bird data to support its mission but there are also those who might give financial support just to be good environmental citizens. The other big role for VSO members will be as atlas volunteers. So when the time comes I hope you will commit to help with this long-term project.

Rexanne



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The Virginia Society of Ornithology NEWSLETTER

Conservation Corner

Sea-level Rise and Marsh Birds: The Need for Regulatory Contingency Plans

The contribution of climate change on the level of the ocean relative to land will have profound consequences on the biological and social systems of the world. The earth's sea-levels are forecasted to rise 0.5-2 meters before the end of this century. This global sea change will consume dry land, reshape our coastlines, and reconfigure our wetlands. Such changes will also create classes of winners and losers among coastal zone inhabitants according to their affinities of the landforms being altered.

Because of their low position on the landscape, salt marshes will be the first landform consumed by rising seas. The marshes of the Chesapeake Bay region are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise because the current rate of sea-level rise in the Bay is twice the global average. Waters of the Bay appear to be rising so quickly due to baseline global increases and because the land of this region is also undergoing an unusually high degree of subsidence. In many areas of the Bay large portions of marshes are already being submerged where the sea is rising faster than marshes can accumulate sediments to maintain elevation.

Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay region provide critical habitat for birds on a continental scale. The Chesapeake Bay region of Virginia and Maryland supports nearly 30 % of the salt marsh cover along the Atlantic coast and 60 % of salt marsh cover north of the Carolinas. Because of this concentration of habitat and its geographic position along the Atlantic Flyway, the Bay region is essential for supporting significant proportions of the continental populations that breed here, as well as those that emanate from other locations but use the region for migration or in winter.

Many of the bird species that depend exclusively on salt marshes (hereafter "marsh birds") are already of high conservation concern because their populations are small or declining. This is due, in part, to the fact that marsh birds require habitats that are spatially restricted within a narrow band between marine and terrestrial environments. Marsh birds are limited further because they often require a combination of resources within salt marshes that are only met in a

fraction of this total area. In addition, marsh bird habitats have been declining for over a century from historical sea-level rise and human degradation or conversion to other uses.

Understanding the future impacts of climate change and sea-level rise are necessary to take appropriate conservation action. The Center for Conservation Biology has the unique opportunity to forecast the potential impacts of sea-level rise on marsh birds because of the particular focus we have given to examining the driving influences of marsh bird distribution and population abundance. Over the past 18 years we have worked in nearly 400 marsh patches in the Bay region. We have found that because marsh bird abundance and distribution are influenced by the physical characteristics of marshes such as salinity, vegetation, patch size, and elevation that the impact of sea-level rise on the population size of each species is more complex than simply calculating net changes in marsh area alone. We recently coupled this wealth of information along with very detailed projection models that simulate the impacts of sea-level rise on marsh availability and condition. Model outputs are spatially explicit so not only do they project overall changes in marsh bird population size but also highlight specific areas of the Bay region where populations may be most at risk.

The results of this sea-level rise forecast reveal a grim outlook for the breeding marsh birds of this region. Species such as Clapper Rail, Virginia Rail, Willet, Seaside Sparrow, and Marsh Wren will experience population declines of nearly 80% if sea-levels rise 1–2 meters by the year 2100. Sea-level rise will be particularly damaging to species that rely solely on high elevation marshes because much of the high marsh in the region will be converted to low marsh with projected increases. The high marsh species such as the Black Rail, Salt-marsh Sparrow, and Henslow's Sparrow are already at risk of extirpation from the region. Climate change may have sealed their final destiny because all of the known breeding sites of

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Editors:

Linda Fields
Alan Schreck

Editorial Address:

1573 21st Court North
Arlington, VA 22209
vseditors@virginiabirds.net

Change of Address:

Thelma Dalmas
1230 Viewmont Dr.
Evinston, VA 24550-2006
jtdalmas@juno.com

Send submissions electronically via e-mail whenever possible. Attach text as Word document or plain text file. Attach images as tifs; scan photos to 300 dpi and line art to 1000 dpi.

You may also mail your submission on a PC formatted diskette. Hard copy may be mailed, but must be received two weeks prior to deadline.

Submissions may be edited for style or length.

2010 Submission Schedule

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Copy Due</u>
Spring 2010	Jan 22
Summer 2010	May 14
Fall 2010	Aug 13
Winter 2010	Oct 29

Birds reported in this newsletter may not have been approved by VARCOM (The Virginia Avian Records Committee).

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Conservation Corner

Sea-level Rise and Marsh Birds: The Need for Regulatory Contingency Plans

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these three species were obliterated in the simulation by rising waters so it is likely they will disappear from the region.

The limiting factors that climate change imposes on species' distribution and viability will pose the greatest challenges for conservation planning. The obvious issues that society must deal with are whether these limits are inevitable or to some extent under management control. For example, vegetation changes produced from climate change may be impossible to alleviate in mountainous areas. However, there are obvious opportunities to lessen the impacts of sea-level rise on marsh birds in coastal areas.

Curbing the impact of human development on marsh habitats provides the most hopeful opportunity for the conservation of marshes and to lessen the impacts of sea-level rise. The Chesapeake Bay region has one of the fastest growing human populations in the United States and is expected to double by the end of the 21st century. Past history has shown that urbanization is responsible for the bulk of the wetlands destroyed within the region.

Sea-level rise will inevitably convert uplands to new marshes. However this can only occur where topography is favorable and no barriers to the upslope migration of marshes are present. Eventually, marshes that are prevented from migrating into adjacent uplands will be squeezed out of existence. This is one reason why our projections for marsh bird population loss are so high. The construction of bulkheads, rip-rap, and

revetments along the shoreline to control erosion and the direct development of urban areas is an ever growing trend in this region. If this trend continues our projections of marsh bird population loss will be exceeded. Improved regulation and spatial planning of human development along the shoreline are needed to reduce human impacts that can worsen the effects of sea-level rise. Finally, since some level of marsh loss to sea-level rise for the future is inevitable there will be an increasing need to protect the integrity of marsh patches that are expected to remain in existence.

Long term conservation of marshes in the face of sea-level rise can only be implemented if society decides to take on this burden. The general populous must be made to understand that marshes not only provide habitat for birds but also provide essential support for fisheries, water quality, and protection of the land from storms. All of these ecological services will be diminished from the impacts sea-level rise. Perhaps the most persuasive educational tool that the conservation community can deliver is to provide clear linkages between the diminishing return that sea-level rise imposes on the economic capital of these services with and without the implementation of appropriate conservation measures.

*~Michael Wilson
Center for Conservation Biology
College of William & Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University*

Jackson Abbott Conservation Award

Presented to Larry Valade and his late wife, Mrs. Thrya Valade

One of the highlights of the banquet at the Virginia Society of Ornithology's 2010 annual meeting was the awarding of the 2010 Jackson Abbott Conservation Award to Larry Valade and his late wife, Thrya, for the example they set by donating their property to the University of Mary Washington and placing a conservation easement on it.

Several years ago the Valades realized how valuable their property was as nesting habitat for migratory and resident birds and decided to place a conservation easement on it to protect it in perpetuity. Working with the University of Mary Washington and the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, they succeeded in not only placing a conservation easement on the property, but ensuring that it would become a place for the "students, faculty, and staff [to] study ... birds and other wildlife, plants and related ecosystems."

As Andrew Dolby, in his nominating letter wrote "if more private landholders followed [in their path], their collective

action would have a tremendous effect on avian conservation. This single act of selflessness, especially during a profitable real estate market, is hugely symbolic of the good that can be achieved through many individual decisions ..."

Jan Clark of Mary Washington's Office of Gift Planning wrote: "Because of their forethought and generosity, future generations of birds will have a welcome place to rest on their migratory journeys or to nest and raise their young. Future generations ... will have a pristine place to learn from nature and ... [their] example of selfless commitment to wildlife habitat and what they might do in their own lives to have a positive effect on all things natural.

The Jackson Abbott Award is given for outstanding work in conserving Virginia's birds and/or the state's natural areas.

*~Joe Coleman
VSO Conservation Committee*

New and Noteworthy

New Members

January 24, 2010–May 17, 2010

The VSO bids welcome to the following new members:

John & Marilyn Adair, Yorktown
 Caleb R. Burgoyne, Springfield
 Bob & Linda Cole, Ashland
 Lesslie Crowell, Charlottesville
 Ms. Terri Cuthriell, Smithfield
 Patty Elton, Powhatan
 Jen Folts, Fredericksburg
 Dr. Jimmy Gates, Farmville
 Diane W. Holsinger, Timberville
 Kathleen Howley, New York NY
 Barbara R. Hussey, Arlington
 Ann Ingram, Crewe
 Bruce Jones, Washington
 Peter Jowaisas, Lynchburg
 Ann W. McDowell, Virginia Beach
 Cliff & Joyce Mendel, Belle Haven
 Trudy Mitchell, Richmond
 Janet Paisley, Charlottesville
 Rob Payne, Leesburg
 Marie Pitts, Williamsburg
 Mike Propst, Newport News

Stephen Reeves, Radford
 Joe Sedransk, Chevy Chase MD
 Stuart Sweetman, Newport News
 Thomas F. Watts Jr., Yorktown
 Robert F. Wein & Isabel Einzig-Wein, Reston
 Reginald White, Midlothian
 Max Wilson, Kensington MD
 Diane & Len Young, Oakton

E-mail Newsletter Delivery Option Coming Soon

Starting with the Winter 2010 issue, VSO members will have the option to receive their newsletters via e-mail. Electronic delivery will be completely optional and paper copies will continue to be mailed to those who wish to receive them. By offering paperless newsletter delivery the VSO can reduce the environmental impact of its operations and possibly increase funding for other worthy purposes such as conservation grants and educational programs. If you would like to receive your newsletter by e-mail to help the VSO save paper and money please send an e-mail message to Andrew Dolby, at adolby@umw.edu, and type "VSO e-mail newsletter" in the subject line. Be sure to include your full name in the body of your message.

VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY
 TREASURER'S REPORT CONDENSED
 2009 CALENDAR YEAR

BEGINNING BALANCES:

General Fund	\$49,089.11
Restricted Funds	\$132,597.86
Total	\$181,686.97

RECEIPTS:

Dues	\$12,990.00
Other General	\$3,273.67
Designated Funds	\$1,645.00
Endowment Fund	\$1,710.32
Life Memberships	\$0.00
Murray Fund	\$2,398.14
Thanksgiving Fund	\$307.52
Small Grants Conservation Fund	\$785.00
Total	\$23,109.65

DISBURSEMENTS:

General Fund	\$17,263.74
Endowment	\$751.00
Murray Award	\$2,158.16
Thanksgiving	\$119.44
Small Grants Conservation	\$665.39
Total	\$20,957.73

ENDING BALANCES:

General Fund	\$49,734.04
Restricted Funds	\$134,104.85
ENDING BALANCE	\$183,838.89

Barbara S. Thrasher, Treasurer

Restricted Funds are the Endowment, Murray, Thanksgiving and Life Membership Funds (s357..z373)

VSO Holds Annual Meeting in Farmville

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the rich history and natural diversity of the Southside region: Bear Creek Lake State Park, a 40-acre lake surrounded by 16,000 acres of state forest; Twin Lakes State Park, a relic of the era of segregation but also a nice patch of woods for birding; Briery Creek Lake and Sandy River Reservoir, two large water impoundments just minutes from Farmville; Red Hill Plantation, the final home and resting place of Patrick Henry; Darlington Heights, the center of Margaret Watson Bird Club's Christmas Bird Count circle; and High Bridge Trail State Park, Virginia's newest state park, a Rails-to-Trails project that features an impressive Civil War-era bridge.

While the "expert birders" were off on field trips Saturday morning, Ted Floyd returned to Wilck's Lake and offered a special "bare-naked birding" field trip for beginners; one of Ted's specialties, the idea being to go birding without binoculars. The trip had been advertised in the local newspaper and announced on local radio stations, so it attracted members of the general public as

well as some VSO members. Ted emphasized listening for birds and identifying them by their naked-eye characteristics. It must have worked, because the group netted fifty-five species, more than had been seen at that location the previous day by expert birders *with* binoculars! Saturday afternoon featured a technical paper session, with students and scientists presenting the results of their research. The talks represented work carried out by Longwood University, the College of William and Mary, the University of Mary Washington, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The technical session was followed by a book signing sponsored by Buteo Books (www.buteobooks.com), a local vendor specializing in field guides from around the world. They had an ample supply of *The Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, authored by Ted Floyd, who was there to sign the books.

Saturday evening's activities began with a reception at the Longwood University dining hall providing meeting attendees the opportunity to mingle with VSO officers,



Bare-Naked Birding at Wick's Lake.



board members, members of the Margaret Watson Bird Club, and the banquet speaker, before enjoying a delicious buffet dinner. Each table was adorned with a unique bluebird house centerpiece provided by the Ruth Adams Garden Club and one lucky person at each table, selected by a winning sticker on the bottom of their chair, took home the centerpiece. A special door prize, an Audubon Baltimore Oriole print, was presented by a random drawing of all the banquet ticket holders.

Andrew Dolby served as master of ceremonies for the evening. He presented the Jackson Abbott Conservation award to Larry Valade, who with his late wife, Thrya, placed a 20 acre parcel under conservation easement and then donated the land to the University of Mary Washington, where it now serves as a nature sanctuary and research site. Andrew also presented the VSO President's Pin to David Spears, outgoing President. He announced the college students who would receive the Murray Research Awards were Marie Pitts, an Master of Science student at the College of William and Mary who studied the reproductive success of bluebirds on golf courses, and Stephen Reeves, a Bachelor of Science student at Radford University who studied the effects of supplemental feeding on the levels of corticosterone in bluebirds.

Prizes were also presented to the winners of the Margaret Watson Bird Club sponsored student art contest. Over eighty entries were received in three categories, K-4, 5-8, and 9-12, all featuring bird art. Meeting participants had the opportunity to view and vote for their favorites during the weekend. From those who voted, a single ballot was selected to receive a special incentive, a wooden Carolina Chickadee hand carved by noted bird carver, Randy Thrasher.

The banquet speaker was Ted Floyd, editor of American Birding Association's *Birding* magazine, author of the *Smithsonian Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, instructor with the ABA's Institute for Field Ornithology, and frequent speaker at bird festivals. In his talk on "Birding at Night – The Final Frontier" he related how he began birding at night when his young children would often wake in the wee hours. He would take them outside to enjoy the fresh air and discovered that a wide variety of birds were passing over his home in the dark. This observation led to an interesting series of discoveries about nocturnal bird migration. His fascinating presentation included actual bird calls played in the dark through speakers in the room's ceiling, thus simulating the experience that had excited his interest.

On Sunday morning, several of Saturday's field trips were repeated and a trek to the John H. Kerr Reservoir, a large man-made lake on the North Carolina border was also offered. This foray deep into the southern Piedmont provided an opportunity to add several new species, including Brown-headed Nuthatch and Caspian Tern to the weekend composite bird list, which ended up totaling 121 species.

The combination of field trips, exhibits, technical presentations, good food and fellowship with like-minded birders made the 2010 VSO Annual Meeting an exceptional weekend. Many participants came away with an expanded appreciation of the natural beauty, history, and habitat diversity of the Farmville area, not to mention a new interest in birding at night. Once again, the VSO Annual Meeting was an event not to be missed.

~ David Spears
Annual Meeting Chair

Virginia Birds still needs a North Region Editor

Virginia Birds is the VSO's quarterly journal of ornithological sightings. The editors are seeking a regional editor to complete reports for the North Region which consists of Arlington, Culpepper, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, Madison, Prince William, Rappahannock, and Stafford Counties and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church Manassas and Manassas Park.

If you are an experienced birder with an interest in compiling the report for this region please contact the editors at vsoeditors@comcast.net.



VSO Chincoteague Field Trip

September 10-12, 2010

Every fall is different at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, so join trip leaders Bill Akers and Jerry, Via to discover the surprises that await on this year's VSO trip. In 2009 participants tallied 124 species including a great combination of waterfowl, shorebirds, and migrating songbirds.

Headquarters...The Refuge Motor Inn will again be the headquarters for the field trip. Room rate is \$103.50 per night for a single or a double room with a two night minimum stay. For those arriving a day early, the rate for Thursday night is \$90. The inn is totally non-smoking and no pets are allowed. To assure the VSO rate, make reservations by August 10 and state you are with the VSO. The hotel is located on 378 Beach Road, Chincoteague, Virginia, 23336; Phone 800 544-8469 or 757 336-5511.

Meals...The Refuge Inn offers a complimentary continental breakfast for guests. For other meals participants will be able to choose from any number of local restaurants.

Check In...Check-in time is 4:00 PM. A schedule of events will be available at the VSO headquarters, located in the conference room at the far end of the Refuge Inn. The room will be opened Friday from 4:00 – 5:30 PM and again at 7:30 PM.

Friday Night...Jerry Via will present a trip orientation and slide program at 8:00 PM in the conference room. He and Bill Akers will also give a preview of birds in the area and a synopsis of the field trips for the week-end.

Saturday Field Trips...There will be a variety of field trip experiences to choose from including a morning warbler walk on the Woodland Trail to look for migrating songbirds, a motorcade to Assateague Beach with frequent stops to look at shorebirds, and birding and biking to explore the Wildlife Loop. No cars are allowed in this area until 3:00 PM so it's a safe, easy ride. Bikes can be rented at the shop next to the Refuge Inn for those who do not bring their own. There will be a species tally in the late afternoon in the conference room.

Specialty Tours...A bus trip to the Wash Flats will be offered at 1:00 PM on Saturday. This is a restricted area in the refuge that can only be entered with special permission. Most viewing will be from inside the bus. The VSO has requested permission for participants to disembark twice during the trip. A decision is pending. The shorebirds and raptors are often abundant in this area so the trip leaders feel that the trip is worth offering. The bus capacity is 30 people and the minimum number for the trip is 20. The cost is \$12 per person for VSO members and \$17 for non-members. Reservations for this trip must be made in advance with Jerry Via via viaj@vt.edu or 540 951-7821. Payment will be taken at the registration area. If you are unable to attend after making your reservation, contact Jerry so that he may open up your space for someone else.

Sunday...Many of the Saturday field trips will be repeated. Check out time at most motels is 11:00 AM.

Other Accommodations in the Area...Best Western, 800-553-6117; Sea Hawk, 757 336-6527; Lighthouse, 757 336-5091.

For additional information about lodging and restaurant options, check out the Chincoteague town website: www.chincoteaguechamber.com

If you have any questions, contact Meredith Bell, VSO field trip co-chair: 804 824-4958 (cell) or merandlee@cox.net.

Report from the VSO Outer Banks Field Trip

Despite challenging weather conditions, 24 enthusiastic birders attended the February 5 – 7 trip to the Outer Banks and were rewarded with 126 species.

Participants on the Friday pelagic trip with Brian Patteson enjoyed great looks at Greater Shearwater, Manx Shearwater, Red Phalarope, Great Skua, Black-legged Kittiwake, Dovekie, Razorbill and Atlantic Puffin.

Even birding from hotel balconies and the outdoor platform was productive. Iceland Gull and Little Gull were seen close-in at the edge of the water. Northern Gannets gave quite a show flying up and down off the coast, while Bonaparte and Lesser Black-backed Gulls entertained. Common and Red-throated Loons, Razorbill, and Red-breasted Merganser were also spotted, but there were few other birds in the ocean due to the very rough conditions caused by the high winds.

The strong northwest winds and heavy rains of the previous week caused many birds to take refuge in pockets of water near the road so on Saturday some of the best views were from vehicles, where on one stop Marbled Godwit, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler and Northern Pintail were seen.

Other highlights included a huge raft of over 2,000 Redheads in clear view from the causeway between Nags Head and Manteo; hundreds of Northern Pintail; Tundra Swan and Tree Swallow at Alligator River NWR; both White and Brown Pelicans at Pea Island; and a Eurasian Wigeon with a large group of American Wigeons at Boddie Island.

At Alligator River NWR there was an abundance of raptors on Sunday – six Bald Eagles, six Red-tailed Hawks, and four Northern Harriers and good looks at Eastern Meadowlark and Horned Lark. Boddie Island now has a great boardwalk and outstanding elevated observation platform that gives fantastic views in all directions.

~Meredith Bell, Co-Chair, Field Trip Committee

The complete species list for the weekend is shown below.

Snow Goose	Northern Gannet	Western Sandpiper	Horned Lark
Brant	American White Pelican	Dunlin	Tree Swallow
Canada Goose	Brown Pelican	Short-billed Dowitcher	Carolina Chickadee
Tundra Swan	Double-crested Cormorant	Wilson's Snipe	Tufted Titmouse
Wood Duck	Great Cormorant	Red Phalarope	Red-breasted Nuthatch
Gadwall	American Bittern	Great Skua	Brown-headed Nuthatch
Eurasian Wigeon	Great Blue Heron	Little Gull	Carolina Chickadee
American Wigeon	Great Egret	Bonaparte's Gull	Winter Wren
American Black Duck	Snowy Egret	Ring-billed Gull	Eastern Bluebird
Mallard	Tricolored Heron	Herring Gull	Hermit Thrush
Blue-winged Teal	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Iceland Gull	American Robin
Northern Shoveler	White Ibis	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Northern Pintail	Turkey Vulture	Great Black-backed Gull	Brown Thrasher
Green-winged Teal	Bald Eagle	Black-legged Kittiwake	European Starling
Canvasback	Northern Harrier	Common Tern	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Redhead Duck	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Forster's Tern	Chipping Sparrow
Ring-necked Duck	Cooper's Hawk	Dovekie	Savannah Sparrow
Greater Scaup	Red-shouldered Hawk	Razorbill	Song Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Red-tailed Hawk	Atlantic Puffin	Swamp Sparrow
Common Eider	American Kestrel	Rock Pigeon	White-throated Sparrow
Surf Scoter	American Coot	Mourning Dove	Dark-eyed Junco
Black Scoter	Black-bellied Plover	Great Horned Owl	Northern Cardinal
Long-tailed Duck	Semipalmated Plover	Belted Kingfisher	Red-winged Blackbird
Bufflehead	Killdeer	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Eastern Meadowlark
Hooded Merganser	American Oystercatcher	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Rusty Blackbird
Red-breasted Merganser	American Avocet	Downy Woodpecker	Common Grackle
Red-throated Loon	Greater Yellowlegs	Northern Flicker	Boat-tailed Grackle
Common Loon	Lesser Yellowlegs	Pileated Woodpecker	Brown-headed Cowbird
Pied-billed Grebe	Willet	Eastern Phoebe	House Finch
Horned Grebe	Marbled Godwit	Blue Jay	American Goldfinch
Greater Shearwater	Ruddy Turnstone	American Crow	
Manx Shearwater	Sanderling	Fish Crow	



2010 J. J. Murray Research Award Recipients

The VSO established the J. J. Murray Research Award in 1980 to honor the Rev. J. J. Murray, Sr., a charter member of the VSO and the editor of its journal, *The Raven*, from its inception until 1969. The \$1000 award is designed to promote undergraduate and graduate research, and the research must consist of field studies on Virginia birds. Proposals are judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of Virginia avifauna. Since 2003 the VSO has been able to grant two such awards, thanks to the generosity of the Northern Neck of Virginia Audubon Society, which has supplied a matching grant for the award.

This year's recipients are Marie Pitts and Stephen Reeves. Marie's project is entitled, "Land cover predictors of occupancy and reproductive success of eastern bluebirds on golf courses: an observational, experimental, and multi-scale approach". She is a Master of Science candidate at the College of William and Mary and is working under the guidance of Dr. John Swaddle.

Stephen Reeves' project explores the "Effect of supplemental feeding on corticosterone in Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*)". Stephen is a Bachelor of Science student at Radford University and is working under the guidance of Drs. Jason Davis and Judy Guinan.

The VSO congratulates Marie and Stephen and wishes them well on their projects this year.

Special thanks are also due to the three individuals who served as judges in the evaluation of proposals this year; Teta Kain, Dr. Joella Kilian, Professor of Biology at the University of Mary Washington, and Dr. Paul Callo, Assistant Professor of Biology at Mary Baldwin College.

The VSO's J. J. Murray Research Award is supported by an endowment fund. Contributions to the fund are a way that individuals can play a role in supporting this worthwhile endeavor. For more information contact Gene Sattler (gsattler@liberty.edu, 434 582-2229).

~Gene Sattler, Murray Award Chair



The Raven

Call for Manuscripts

Wes Brown, the newly-appointed editor of *The Raven*, asks all readers to consider *The Raven* as a suitable venue for the publication of their future studies, reviews, reports, original observations, book reviews or other information relevant to birding and the study of birds in Virginia. *The Raven* is the VSO's twice yearly journal containing articles relevant to Virginia ornithology and documentation of the proceedings of the Virginia Society of Ornithology and its chapters. It is Brown's intention to ensure that *The Raven* is published in a timely manner. He has finished compiling the material for the 2008 volume (Vol. 79), which will appear as a single issue and is in the process of compiling the material for 2009 (Vol. 80), which will also be a single issue, and for the first of the two 2010 issues (Vol. 81). Both Vol. 80 and Vol. 81 (issue 1) will be sent to the printer by December of 2010.

Manuscripts describing studies or other activities that took place before December 31, 2009 and reviews of

books that were published during or before 2009 will be considered for publication in Vol. 80, if submitted by September 1, 2010. Material describing activities that took place in 2010 and any older material submitted after September 1, 2010 will be considered for publication in Vol. 81. A November 15, 2010 cutoff date for the first issue of Vol. 81 is anticipated. All material submitted will be reviewed by Brown and at least one other reviewer and technical studies and reports will also be sent to two external reviewers. Although Vol. 79 will appear in the same half-page format as previous volumes of *The Raven*, it is likely that subsequent volumes will appear in full-page format, with either two or three columns per page, in order to allow greater flexibility for presenting graphic material. For the text draft of the "information for contributors" section that will appear in Vol. 79 and subsequent volumes see "Information for Contributors" below.

Information for Contributors

The Raven, the official journal of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO), functions to publish original contributions and original review articles in ornithology relating to Virginia birdlife. Electronic files are the required form for manuscript submission. Text files, prepared using a Mac OS-compatible word processing program or Microsoft® Word, should contain minimal formatting. Graphics (photos, maps, graphs, charts) should be sent as high quality EPS or JPEG files. An accompanying "cover" file should be e-mailed to the editor stating (1) article title, (2) author(s) full name(s) and e-mail and home or institutional address(es) and, for multi-authored manuscripts, (3) the name of one author designated to carry out correspondence with the editor. If the manuscript or report is technical, a list of persons who would be appropriate reviewers should also be included in the "cover file." Authors are encouraged to consult with the editor on additional matters of content, format, or style. Most Manuscripts published in *The Raven* concern the distribution, abundance and migration of birds in Virginia. Manuscripts on other ornithological topics, including Virginia-based historical reviews, bibliographical reviews, life histories, and behavioral observations, are also welcomed. In addition, the journal serves to publish the official proceedings of the VSO and other formal items pertaining to all aspects of the Society's activities. *The Raven* may also publish articles pertaining to the activities of various public and private organizations engaged in biological and conservation work in Virginia. *The Raven* is a peer-reviewed journal; all feature articles and short communications are reviewed before a decision about acceptance for publication is made. Format of *The Raven* generally follows guidelines set by the Council for Biology Editors as outlined in the CBE style manual, 6th edition, 1994 (Council of Biology Editors, Inc., 11250 Roger Bacon Dr., Reston, VA 20190). Recent volumes of *The Raven* should be inspected for style. Vernacular and scientific names of birds should be those in the most recent edition (and supplement) of the A.O.U.'s Check-list of North American Birds (www.aou.org/checklist/north). Vernacular names should be capitalized; scientific names should be italicized. All size, temperature and other measurements should be in metric units.

Wes Brown, Parksley VA



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