

VSO Newsletter

A publication of The Virginia Society of Ornithology



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Summer 2011

CONTENTS:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| President's Message | 2 |
| Local Chapter Notes | 3 |
| New and Noteworthy | 4 |
| Kiptopeke Challenge | 4 |
| VSO Receives Award | 4 |
| Treasurer's Report | 5 |
| VSO Fall Trip | 6 |
| JJ Murray Award | 7 |
| Crane Island Trips | 7 |

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Dates to Remember

AUGUST 20 & 21, 2011
CRANEY ISLAND TRIPS

SEPTEMBER 16-18, 2011
CHINCOTEAGUE TRIP

SEPTEMBER 24, 2011
KIPTOPEKE CHALLENGE

DECEMBER 2-4, 2011
VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP

VSO Holds 2011 Annual Meeting in Harrisonburg

The Rockingham Bird Club welcomed about 100 attendees to the VSO annual meeting held May 13 – 15 in Harrisonburg.

At the Friday night business meeting VSO President Rexanne Bruno welcomed all and officially called the meeting to order. The Treasurer's Report (see page 5) was presented by Thelma Dalmas, for VSO Treasurer Sue Thrasher. Past President David Spears, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of nominees for officer and board member positions. President Bruno called for nominations from the floor. There were none and the proposed slate was adopted by the membership (see page 2). After the business meeting Greg Moyers and Diane Lepkowski presented a preview of the weekend field trips.

For many meeting participants this was a time to bird, bird, bird, and then bird some more. Field trips were the focus on both Saturday and Sunday mornings and many participants spent afternoons visiting trip sites on their own. Weather forecasts, dicey each evening, did not come to pass, few raindrops touched down, and the bit of fog on Saturday didn't get in the way.

Eight organized trips were offered: Hillendale Park & Edith J. Carrier Arboretum led by Tom Lord; Lake Shenandoah & Leonard's Pond led by Tom Mizelland and Dave Wendelken; Augusta Springs Wetlands led by John Spahr and Allen Lerner; Bear Trap/Narrowback Rd led by Ken Hinkle; Bother Knob Area led by William Leigh; Switzer Dam led by Greg Moyers and Clair Mellinger; Pocosin Fire Rd/ Skyline Drive led by Diane Lepkowski; and Madison Run Fire Road led by Bill Benish. The total weekend species count (reported on both organized and impromptu trips) was 129, including 25 species of warblers. The award for high counts, for both species and warblers, goes to the Harrisonburg City dual-site trip, Hillendale Park and Edith J. Carrier Arboretum. Some highlights of the days included Wilson's Warbler at three locations (JMU Arboretum, Hillendale Park and Switzer Dam); Cerulean Warbler collecting tent caterpillar webs for nest-building and Wood Thrush on nest (Pocosin Cabin area, Shenandoah National Park); and a VERY birdy Edith J. Carrier Arboretum, hosting Kentucky Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Black-billed Cuckoo, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Summer Tanager. According to Dr. A. Clair Mellinger's *Birds of Rockingham County*, this may be only the fourth confirmed sighting of a



Dr. Dan Cristol (left) First Recipient of the Mitchell A. Byrd Award for Scientific Achievement with Dr. Byrd. Photo by Kay Gibson, Rockingham Bird Club President

Continued on page 5



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President's Message: Changing Roles

It has been

my privilege to be involved with the Virginia Society of Ornithology for over ten years now, and I am truly honored to be elected as its next president. I am eager to follow Rexanne Bruno's highly capable leadership in working to meet the VSO's challenges and to pursue its opportunities.

First, though, I'd like to reflect on my two-year term as vice president. Not many of us associate excitement and intrigue with the vice presidency of any organization. The VP usually fills in when the president can't attend a meeting and is perhaps assigned a few minor tasks, but a stint as vice president is generally far from memorable. However, I have been lucky enough to serve as the VSO's vice president during a time when the position evolved into a job much more interesting than usual. The vice president became the Board of Director's local chapters' liaison. In this capacity, I have enjoyed reaching out to our 28 local chapters around Virginia. We initiated a local chapters presidents' luncheons during the annual meetings, and we launched a new newsletter column to provide a forum for local chapters to share their ideas and accomplishments. I visited and gave presentations at a number of different chapters.

Additionally, based on a suggestion provided during one of our luncheons, I developed and distributed a questionnaire to gather information about local chapters' membership, policies, and activities. What I primarily learned from this questionnaire is that the VSO's local chapters are our organization's lifeblood. So many of you are serving your communities in interesting ways, such as sponsoring scholarships to help children attend nature education camps, raising money for bird conservation, and coordinating local participation in national-scale citizen science projects. Your efforts are advancing the VSO's mission, and I appreciate how well you all are representing the VSO.

In return, the VSO can furnish resources to help you provide even more service to your communities. We offer small grants to support educational programs. For example, if you want to install a bluebird trail to help educate school children, you can apply for funding. We also offer conservation grants if you would like to adopt an Important Bird Area or restore a habitat patch with bird-friendly native plants. Even if all you do is encourage some children or novice birders to join you on a field trip, you are serving the VSO well, but we are here for support if your club would like to increase its activity level.

The survey also revealed one trend that may warrant some attention; a surprisingly small percentage of local chapter participants are VSO members. If you are in a leadership position for your local club, you can help by encouraging VSO membership and spreading the word about VSO membership benefits, and how the VSO helps Virginia's birds, and assists its local chapters.

Serving as local chapter liaison has not only been enjoyable, but I believe it has prepared me for VSO leadership more than any other job could have. I have learned much about how the VSO operates, and I have had the pleasure of meeting many more VSO members from around the state than I would have otherwise. Although I am looking forward to serving as president, I now turn over the vice presidency to Joe Coleman with some hesitancy, not because I'm concerned about how he'll perform (he'll be an exceptional vice president), but because I'm genuinely going to miss the job.

Andrew



2011 VSO Election Results

New Members take office July 1, 2011

President: Andrew Dolby

Vice President: Joe Coleman

Past President: Rexanne Bruno

Treasurer: Sue Thrasher

Secretary: Alyce Quinn

Membership Chair: Thelma Dalmás

Editors of the VSO Newsletter:

Linda Fields and Alan Schreck

Editor of The Raven: Wes Brown

Board Members (Terms ending 2013)

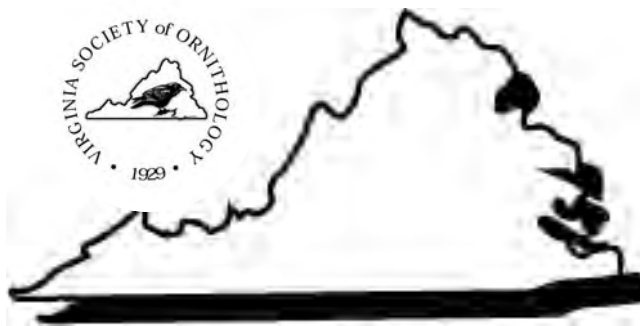
Tiffany Corsello, King George County, VA

Mark Fink, Farmville, VA

Jerry Thornhill, Elk Garden, VA



News and Notes from the Local Chapters



The purpose of this column is to provide a venue for Local Chapters to share their accomplishments and ideas on a regular basis. Contact information for each local chapter, can be found on the VSO's Member Chapters page: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/chaps.html>

~ *Andrew Dolby, VSO President Elect*

Roanoke Valley Bird Club members and friends donated \$8860 to the National Wildlife Federation to clean up and restore habitat in the areas affected by the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. The club originally planned to match \$500 in member contributions to the fund. But the response from club members was so generous that \$2215 was collected. The club's Board decided to match the entire amount, bringing the RVBC donation to \$4430. Scott's Wild Bird Food then matched the club's donation. So the \$2215 donated by members turned into a whopping \$8860.

The **Margaret H. Watson Bird Club** in Farmville celebrated its 20th anniversary at its May meeting. Wes Teets, a graduating senior at Longwood University, presented an informative program entitled "Breeding Bird Communities in Managed Habitats in the Virginia Piedmont." Wes's research in the summer of 2010 was partially funded by a scholarship from the club. Carolyn Wells, who brought together local birders in the fall of 1991 to organize the club, gave a brief history of its early years.

Members of the **Augusta Bird Club** repaired and replaced 22 Blue Bird boxes on Bell's Lane in Staunton

and 15 boxes in Swoope. All of the boxes are currently being monitored. The club is providing scholarships for area youths to attend Nature Camp this summer. Club members also hosted an Earth Day for local Girl Scout Troops at Mary Baldwin College. There were approximately 25 participants and among other activities, the scouts made seed cone feeders and painted Blue Bird boxes, nine of which were installed on the Mary Baldwin campus.

The **Monticello Bird Club** has been quite active in 2010 and 2011. They had eight programs with average attendance of about fifty people and conducted many interesting field trips. The club maintains a Website, <http://www.monticellobirdclub.org>, which has instructions for signing on to their county bird alert and other information about the club.

All the local chapters attendees would like to thank Susan and Wes Brown for generously supporting the local chapters' presidents luncheon held during the VSO's annual meeting in Harrisonburg. This luncheon provided a valuable opportunity for local chapter leaders to get to know each other and exchange ideas.

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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.

2011 Submission Schedule

| Issue | Copy Due |
|-------------|----------|
| Spring 2011 | Jan 21 |
| Summer 2011 | May 27 |
| Fall 2011 | Aug 12 |
| Winter 2011 | Oct 28 |

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

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VSO Receives Distinguished Service Award

The Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) recently honored the VSO with the Harry Armistead Service Award in recognition of its long-term support and partnership. Presenting the award at the CVWO meeting, held at Kiptopeke State Park on November 13, 2010, CVWO President, Brian Taber, spoke of the generous assistance the VSO had provided to the Observatory since its beginning in 1994 including the consistent VSO representation on the CVWO Board, the recent CVWO/VSO partnership with Virginia eBird, and the VSO's involvement with the Kiptopeke Song Bird Station since its inception in 1963. Paul Nasca (VSO Board Member 2008-2011) accepted the award on behalf of the VSO.



*Paul Nasca (left) and Harry Armistead
Photo by Brian Taber, CVWO President*

Call for Teams – The 17th Annual Kiptopeke Challenge

The Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) invites birders of all skill levels to participate in the 17th annual Kiptopeke Challenge on Saturday, September 24, 2011.

The KC is a fun and friendly birding competition. Teams compete to identify the greatest number of bird species in a single day within the competition boundary of Accomack and Northampton Counties, Virginia, including the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel. The Challenge increases awareness of fall bird migration on the Eastern Shore of Virginia and raises funds for the non-profit CVWO.

It is easy to get involved and there are several categories in which to compete: 24-Hour, 3-Hour, Youth Team (age 18 and under) and Special Venue. The event is open to everyone regardless of skill level. It is a great way for participants to sharpen their birding skills while supporting an organization dedicated to avian research, habitat conservation and public education.

For more information, a brochure, or to register write to kiptopekechallenge@gmail.com or visit www.cvwo.org.

New and Noteworthy

New Members

January 21, 2011–June 13, 2011

A Warm welcome to the following new members:

Andrew Baldelli, Norfolk
 Lisa Billow, Norfolk
 George & Virginia Boyles, Yorktown
 Jo & Bud Brown, Blacksburg
 Gail & Tom Claydon, Newport News
 Edward Eder, Alexandria
 Felicity Rask Ericson, Gloucester
 William D. Ferris, Yorktown
 Eve Gaije, Palmyra
 Larry Haugh, Shelburne, VT
 Brian Kreowski, Hillsville
 Terry A. Martin, Dry Fork
 Ryan Mays, Blacksburg

Jo McDowell, Palmyra
 Carleton Moyer, Stafford
 Judy Palladinetti, Bluemont
 Dan Perkuchin, Fishersville
 Margaret R. Peterson, Mt. Airy, MD
 Lisa Schreffler, Dunmore, PA
 Beverly J. Smith, Locust Grove
 Richard Taylor, Fairfax
 Jeff Trollinger, Gum Spring
 Penny Warren, Staunton

Hold the Date

This year's Virginia Beach Field Trip will be December 2–4. Details will be in the fall issue of this newsletter.

The joint annual meetings of the VSO and the Bristol Bird Club will be held in Johnston City, TN May 18 – 20, 2012, featuring high-altitude field trips.



2011 Annual Meeting *Continued from page 1*

Summer Tanager in the Rockingham County/Harrisonburg area, and there have only been a few reports of Brown-headed Nuthatches in the Shenandoah Valley. Red Crossbills were found on Saturday's Bother Knob trip, but unfortunately missed on Sunday (although they were heard flying over.) A few straggling White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows were sighted in several locations. A notable miss was Red-breasted Nuthatch, known to breed in the high elevations of the Allegheny Mountains and often found at Bother Knob. Saturday afternoon's presentation of technical papers included research reports on topics including shade-grown coffee's benefit to habitat preservation (Lenny Bankester), the study of chronic stress response in birds (Andrew Dolby), the effect of supplementary feeding on the Prothonotary Warbler reproduction (Jonathan R. Moore), and the impact of stress on rural vs. urban-living Eastern Bluebirds (Stephen Reeves). Saturday evening's special guest and banquet speaker, Dr. Dan Cristol of the College of William and Mary, gave a presentation detailing the results and future goals of his ongoing research and study of the mercury levels in (and the resulting impact upon) birds in the proximity of the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. The South Fork is known to have been contaminated in the 1940's and 50's by unintended mercury discharge

from a Waynesboro, VA manufacturing plant. Dr. Cristol also paid tribute to RBC member Dr. Charles Ziegenfus (James Madison University) for all of his tireless efforts on the research he has done on Dark-eyed Juncos at Mountain Lake. Two highlights of the evening were the VSO's announcement of a new award for scientific contribution, bearing the name of Dr. Mitchell Byrd, and the presentation of the first award to Dr. Dan Cristol.

At the end of the evening the final bid for the bird quilt hand crafted by RBC members and friends was announced. Beth Moore of Arlington, VA. bid of \$1,850 will be donated to the two charities of her choice: VSO's Murray Grant Award (\$1,000) and the Nature Conservancy of Virginia (\$850.)

~ Prepared from material provided by Shirley Devan, VSO Board Member
Diane Lepkowski, Rockingham Bird Club, Vice-President - Field Trips

The VSO sincerely thanks the members of the Rockingham Bird Club who made this meeting such a wonderful experience.

TREASURER'S REPORT CONDENSED 2010 CALENDAR YEAR

| BEGINNING BALANCES: | | DISBURSEMENTS: | |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| General Fund | \$49,734.04 | General Fund | \$30,650.59 |
| Restricted Funds | \$134,104.85 | Endowment | 750.00 |
| Total | \$183,838.89 | Murray Award | \$2,068.54 |
| | | Thanksgiving | 0.00 |
| RECEIPTS: | | Small Grants Conservation | 1,000.00 |
| Dues | \$14,450.00 | Total | \$34,469.13 |
| Other General | \$2,169.52 | | |
| Designated Funds | \$6,735.00 | ENDING BALANCES: | |
| Endowment Fund | \$3,059.28 | General Fund | \$42,437.97 |
| Life Memberships | \$500.00 | Restricted Funds | \$137,392.60 |
| Murray Fund | \$1,947.89 | ENDING BALANCE | \$179,830.57 |
| Thanksgiving Fund | \$3.40 | | |
| Small Grants Conservation Fund | \$1,595.72 | | |
| Total | \$30,460.81 | | |

Barbara S. Thrasher, Treasurer

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



VSO Fall Field Trip

Chincoteague, VA

September 16–18, 2011

Trip Leaders: Bill Akers and Jerry Via

Every fall is different at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, so join us to discover the surprises that await on this year’s annual fall VSO trip. In 2010, we tallied 148 species, including a great combination of waterfowl, shorebirds and migrating songbirds.

Headquarters The Refuge Inn on Beach Road in Chincoteague will be the host hotel (800 544-8469 or 757 336-5511). Room rates are \$97.75 (\$107.53 with tax) per night for single or double room with a minimum two night stay. For those arriving a day early or staying an extra day, the rate for Thursday and Sunday nights is \$85. The Refuge Motor Inn is totally non-smoking and no pets are allowed. To assure the VSO rate, make reservations by August 16, stating you are with the VSO

Meals The Refuge Inn offers a complimentary continental breakfast for guests and will open early for the VSO at 7:00 AM. There are many restaurant options in Chincoteague for other meals.

Check In The VSO headquarters, located in the conference room at the far end of the Refuge Inn, will be open on Friday from 4:00-5:30 PM and again at 7:30 PM for participants to pick up a schedule of events.

Friday Night An evening orientation and slide program will be presented by Jerry Via at 8:00 PM in the conference room. Jerry and Bill Akers will also give a preview of birds in the area and a synopsis of the field trips for the weekend.

Saturday Field Trips A variety of trips will be offered including: a “Morning Warbler Walk” on the Woodland Trail to look for migrating songbirds; “Motorcade to Assateague Beach,” with frequent stops to look at shorebirds; and “Birding and Biking” to explore the wildlife loop, which is closed to cars until 3:00 PM mak-

ing it a safe, easy ride. (Bikes can be rented at the shop next to the Refuge Inn). There will be a tally of the day’s species late in the afternoon in the conference room.

Specialty Tour A bus trip to the Wash Flats will be offered at 1:00 PM on Saturday. This is a restricted area in the refuge, which can only be entered with special permission. Shorebirds and raptors are often abundant. Permission has been requested to disembark twice on the way out of the area. The bus has a capacity for 30 people and the minimum number for the trip is 20. The cost per person is \$12 for VSO members and \$17 for non-members. Reservations in advance are required and can be made by contacting Meredith Bell (contact information below). Payment will be taken at the conference room on Friday.

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

Other Lodging in the Area Best Western (800 553-6117), Sea Hawk (757 336-6527) and Lighthouse (757 336-5091).

The Chincoteague Website can be found at www.chincoteaguechamber.com.

For more information or to register for the bus trip contact Meredith Bell, VSO field trip co-chair at merandlee@cox.net or 804 824-4958 (cell).



Announcing the 2011 J. J. Murray Research Award Recipient

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 studies on Virginia birds. Proposals are judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaningful contribution to the understanding of Virginia avifauna.

This year's recipient is Catherine B. Viverette for her project entitled, "A comparative phylogeographic and landscape genetic analysis of Chesapeake Bay bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) populations." Catherine is a doctoral candidate in the integrative life sciences program at Virginia Commonwealth University, and is working under the guidance of Drs. Rodney Dyer and Greg Garman. We congratulate Catherine, and wish her well on her project this year.

The VSO's J. J. Murray Research Award is supported by an endowment fund, and contributions to this fund are a way individuals can play a role in supporting this worthwhile endeavor. If you would like more information please contact Gene Sattler: gsattler@liberty.edu / (434) 582-2229).

Special VSO Field Trips to Craney Island August 20 and 21, 2011

Trip Leaders: Ruth Beck, Shirley Devan, and Bill Williams

Two special half-day VSO field trips to Craney Island will be held on Saturday, August 20 and Sunday, August 21. The trip leaders, Ruth Beck, Shirley Devan, and Bill Williams have extensive experience with conducting research and birding this area, so they know all the right places to go. For safety reasons, each trip is limited to 20 people. There is no fee for the trip, but you must be a VSO member to participate.

Craney Island has been a favorite birding spot for many Virginia birders, but in recent years access has been restricted due to the work being done there. The site is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and is an active deposition site for dredged material from the Hampton Roads navigation channels. Located on the north side of Portsmouth, the island consists of approximately 2,500 acres for the management of dredged material. Craney provides a variety of habitats attracting a diversity of bird species that reside, breed, migrate through, or winter there. Many migratory birds, including threatened or endangered species, use this area as foraging and breeding grounds. More than 270 bird species have been identified on the island, including numerous species of waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, birds of prey and passerines. Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Red-necked Phalaropes, Black Skimmers, at least five species of terns (Royal, Gull-billed, Common, Forster's, and Least) and many shorebird species are among the birds that can be seen at Craney in August making this a field trip not to be missed.

Participants will meet at 8:30 AM at the entrance of the Craney Island Project office driveway and bird until 12:30 PM. Carpooling is essential in order to limit vehicular traffic for safety purposes. Some walking will be required up to the impoundments and along the dike road to observe the birds in the cells - but not long distances.

To register, contact VSO field trip co-chair, Meredith Bell, at 804 824-4958 or merandlee@cox.net. Register early and specify your preferred date. The trips are expected to fill up quickly and a waiting list will be maintained. Participants will receive details with directions, supplies to bring, and other essential information several days prior to the trip.

If you'd like to participate but are not currently a VSO member, you can get membership information at: <http://vabirds.net/join.html>.



Name & Address:

E-mail Address: _____

Membership: New Renewal Gift

Active--\$20 Family--\$25 Sustaining--\$35 Contributing--\$60

Life Membership--\$500

I would like to make an additional donation to:

\$ _____ Cerulean Warbler Project

\$ _____ Small Grants Conservation Fund

\$ _____ *Virginia Birds*

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A letter will be sent to the recipient notifying them of your gift.

VSO Sales

| | Price | Number | Total |
|--|---------|--------|-------|
| <i>Birds of Smyth County</i> (1999) | \$6.00 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Birds of the Virginia Cumberlands</i> (2001) | \$8.00 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Birds of Prey in Virginia</i> (1990) | \$9.00 | _____ | _____ |
| VSO Field Checklists, 10 | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| VSO Arm Patch | \$4.00 | _____ | _____ |
| VSO Cloisonne Pin | \$5.00 | _____ | _____ |
| <i>Virginia's Birdlife: An Annotated Checklist</i> | \$20.00 | _____ | _____ |
| Total Merchandise | | _____ | _____ |
| Total for Membership and Sales | | _____ | _____ |

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