VSO Annual Conference
Leesburg, Virginia, April 26–28, 2013

Special lodging rate deadline March 26
Conference registration deadline April 15

The VSO Annual Meeting will be held in beautiful Loudoun County from April 26 – 28. Hosted by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the weekend will be full of great events and the opportunity for great birding. The Saturday evening banquet speaker is Julie Zickefoose, author of a very popular blog and several books including *The Bluebird Effect*. Friday evening will feature a special program on warbler identification. There will be field trips all three days to some of Northern Virginia’s finest birding hot spots, a technical paper session on Saturday afternoon, and lots of great exhibits as well as some wonderful vendors on both Friday afternoon and Saturday.

On Friday evening, after a short business meeting, three former Montgomery County, Maryland Bird Club presidents and warbler aficionados will present, *Identifying Warblers*, a presentation about the “jewels of the eastern forest”. This popular program covers nearly every warbler species that breeds in or migrates through Maryland and Virginia. Identification pointers and songs of birds in spring are emphasized. The presentation uses high-resolution photos taken by some of North America’s finest nature photographers and song tracks from the Stokes Bird Song series. The banquet speaker, Julie Zickefoose, is a widely published natural history writer and artist. Educated at Harvard University in biology and art, she worked for six years as a field biologist for The Nature Conservancy before turning to a freelance art career. Her observations on the natural history

Report of the VSO Craney Island Field Trips
August 18–19, 2012

Ruth Beck, of the Williamsburg Bird Club, with assistance from Bill Williams, Brian Taber, and Shirley Devan led carpools of eager Virginia birders around Craney Island in Portsmouth. With extensive mud flats and grassy edges, Craney is a migratory magnet for shorebirds from late July through September. Ruth, Professor of Biology Emeritus at William and Mary, has been studying birds at Craney Island since 1972 with a particular focus on nesting Least Terns and Black-necked Stilts.

On Saturday, 22 birders enjoyed a pleasant morning with light breezes and overcast skies, which made for leisurely scope lines as the group sorted through an amazing diversity of migrating shore birds to pick out their target birds. Of the 67 species seen highlights were 14 Black-necked Stilts and 36 American Avocets, Western Willets, Stilt Sandpipers, and White-rumped Sandpipers. A Marbled Godwit made a very well timed, but brief, visit as it landed directly in front of more than a dozen spotting scopes that had been focused on stilts and avocets. After giving everyone a chance for a nice look, the bird took off and was not seen again.

Some of the Craney Island Birders.
The digital communications and information revolution has brought incalculable change to the way the world does business and the VSO has joined in with some highly effective electronic resources. Arun Bose, our hardworking Webmaster maintains the currency of our well organized and information rich Website. He is also building a new Website for the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM). The VA-bird listserve, funded by the VSO, remains one of the most heavily used means of communication among Virginia’s birders. David Spears, the listserve’s moderator, ensures its integrity and smooth operation.

The VSO expanded its electronic presence by joining Facebook, which provides a dynamic communications tool to our repertoire, allowing users to seamlessly share photos, videos, and interesting stories from the internet. Additionally, our Virginia eBird portal has given us a national presence and provides Virginia’s bird enthusiasts with yet another venue to receive information. Other states are following our lead and setting up their own eBird portals. I am continually amazed by the extent to which eBird has transformed citizen science and made mountains of interesting data available with a few clicks of the mouse.

Thus, we are making progress toward investing ourselves in the digital age and the benefits it brings to organizations like ours. However, we can do more to communicate efficiently with our members and make our transactions convenient. More members than ever are providing their email addresses to us. Over 200 members now receive their quarterly newsletters by email, which will eventually generate savings that can be used for other purposes such as educational programs, conservation projects, and scholarships. We are planning to use an email service to provide an additional means to engage members who prefer to receive more frequent communications from the VSO. Through this approach we can use targeted emails to share news and updates, send membership renewal reminders, and recruit volunteers for special projects. We plan to explore online means by which new members can join and existing members can renew. Online credit card payment would increase convenience, possibly improve our ability to raise funds for special projects, and generally align the VSO with our peer organizations’ current practices.

Shirley Devan, our new Membership Secretary, has expressed her dedication to bringing the VSO’s membership operations and services into the 21st century, and I am behind her efforts all the way. Let’s take full advantage of the information age, save some trees, and put VSO resources where they can do the most good for birds. If you have not yet opted to receive this newsletter electronically, I encourage you to do so. To do this, use the form on the back page, check the box indicating you wish to receive the VSO Newsletter by email and fill in your email address.

Shirley Devan, VSO Membership Secretary

Making the Most of the Information Age

Craney Island Field Trip  Continued from Page 1

On Sunday, 20 birders kept wary eyes on the sky as the predicted storm and “liquid sunshine” held off until the last 30 minutes of the trip. Slightly bettering the Saturday count, 78 species were seen including a bonus of two Upland Sandpipers. Luckily Arun Bose initially spotted them flying over as carpools formed up. The full group soon enjoyed good scope views of the birds exactly where he and others had seen them land nearby. Other highlights were a single Red Knot still with a “red” breast, a singing Northern Bobwhite, and a male Northern Harrier. A few folks observed a flyover Whimbrel. were observed both days and the words “life birds” were heard several times each day.

Many thanks to Field Trip Co-chair, Meredith Bell, who took registrations and managed the waiting list and to Ruth Beck for arranging access to Craney, which is now closed to the public except for special trips such as these.

Shirley Devan, VSO Membership Secretary
Conservation Corner
Bringing Back Bobwhites: A Partnership Effort

On a warm country day, who doesn’t enjoy a cruise through the countryside? You may see flocks of Wild Turkeys pecking about, Barn Swallows zooming through the skies, and small groups of songbirds foraging together. All seems well in the bird world. However, a perceptive mind may soon think about what they are not seeing or hearing and the question may inevitably come, “Where are the quail?”

Once a key representative of countryside avifauna, Northern Bobwhite numbers have been plummeting with over 80% declines since the 1960s. The reason? Simply put, humans have taken away quality quail habitat. Native grasslands, meadows, idle fields, scrublands, hedges and field borders used to be an integral part of our rural landscapes that quail would use for habitat, but no more. The clean agriculture movement of the past half century has cropped every square inch, eliminating the fencerows, hedgerows and field borders that were once common. The current abundance of tall fescue, a non-native, carpet-forming grass, has also been detrimental as it simply grows too thick for quail to get through. Finally, we cannot forget the fact that Virginia is becoming increasingly suburban, with paradise paved to put up a parking lot. Unless we do something about it, the quail really have nowhere to go except downhill.

Fortunately, quail restoration is relatively simple in theory. You may hear biologists use the phrase, “if you build it, they will come” and there is much truth to this saying. Accordingly, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has partnered with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Virginia Tech Conservation Management Institute to hire five Private Lands Wildlife Biologists including myself. Working out of USDA offices, our primary mission is to implement the Quail Recovery Initiative by giving tailored technical assistance to farmers and landowners interested in quail management. We also help participants with the various federal and state cost-share programs that are available to help them implement practices such as the conversion of fescue to native grasses, the development of field borders or wildflower meadows, and invasive species management. These practices directly benefit quail as well as many songbirds that are also facing decline.

Ultimately, habitat restoration is the key. We have already seen local level population rebounds as “quail quilts” of habitat have been sown together by private landowners. It truly is exciting to hear a calling male or flush a covey on newly created habitat. However, for these results to be a statewide reality, rural landowners must play a critical role. We need much greater public interest, engagement and participation. The government simply does not have the land necessary to bring back quail habitat and so our final outcome largely lies in the hands of the people. The technical and financial resources are there, but will the general population join this partnership effort to bring back Bobwhites? We hope they will answer the call!

For more information, contact David Bryan at 540 899-9492 extension101.

-David Bryan is a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist with the Virginia Tech Conservation Management Institute in Partnership with USDA-NRCS and VDGIF

News and Notes from the Local Chapters

This column provides 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 VSO’s Member Chapters page at www.virginiabirds.net/chaps.html. Send items for News and Notes to Joe Coleman, VSO Vice-President, at jcoleman@loudonwildlife.org.

The Augusta Bird Club is proud of Gabriel Mapel, a junior member of the club, who was selected eBird’s birder of the month for September.


Members of the Northern Virginia Bird Club traveled to Cape May in late October and experienced an outstanding weekend of birding, which included watching flurries of raptors fly by the Cape May Hawk Watch and birding with Kevin Karlson, the well known birder and photographer. They also witnessed an amazing show at Higbee Beach one morning when tens of thousands of Yellow-rumped Warblers and many other birds fill the early morning sky.

The Audubon Society of Northern Virginia invites birders of all skill levels to help count waterfowl in Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William counties, including the Potomac and Occoquan watersheds on January 26 & 27, 2013. Studies have revealed that some waterfowl species are facing population decline and habitat loss so it is important to collect data about trends in our local waterfowl population. Novice birders will be paired with experts. Larry Cartwright is this year’s volunteer compiler. For more information and to join the team, please e-mail info@audubonva.org or call 703 438-6008.
VSO Chincoteague Field Trip Report September 14–16, 2012

The weather could not have been better for the 80 plus participants, who tallied 145 species with observations on the Causeway, Chincoteague Island and Chincoteague NWR during the three days.

Mosquitoes were especially challenging this year, but that didn’t deter folks from going on the Woodland Trail in search of migrating passerines. The cool northwesterly winds Saturday night brought in several warbler and vireo species enjoyed by those on the Sunday walk. Saturday’s brave souls were not as fortunate.

Special treats on the birding and biking trip included Lark Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Pectoral Sandpiper. The motorcade to the beach yielded several tern species, American Golden Plover in breeding plumage, Piping Plover, Black Skimmer, Marbled Godwit and lots of Willets.

The bus trips to Wash Flats on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning were sold out once again and participants had great looks at raptors and shorebirds. An American Golden Plover was a highlight for the Saturday group. Sixteen people jumped at the chance to go on a special two-hour boat trip at low tide Saturday afternoon, giving spectacular up-close looks at many shorebirds. Due to the positive response from those who attended, this trip will probably be offered again next year.

A new boardwalk on the left side of the road before the bridge to Assateague Island was an excellent platform for viewing Clapper Rails during low tide. Those staying at the Refuge Inn were treated to the calls of a Great-horned Owl each evening.

Many thanks to field trip leaders Jerry Via, Bill Akers, Ruth Beck, Michael Beck and Lee Bell.

~ Meredith Bell
VSO Field Trips Co-chair

Trip List

Canada Goose
American Wigeon
American Black Duck
Mallard
Blue-winged Teal
Northern Shoveler
Northern Pintail
Green-winged Teal
Ruddy Duck
Northern Bobwhite
Wild Turkey
Pied-billed Grebe
Double-crested Cormorant
Brown Pelican
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Snowy Egret
Little Blue Heron
Tricolored Heron
Cattle Egret
Green Heron
Black-crowned Night-Heron
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
White Ibis
Glossy Ibis
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Osprey
Northern Harrier
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper’s Hawk
Bald Eagle
Red-tailed Hawk
Clapper Rail
Virginia Rail
Black-bellied Plover
American Golden-Plover

Semipalmated Plover
Piping Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
Spotted Sandpiper
Solitary Sandpiper
Greater Yellowlegs
Willet
Lesser Yellowlegs
Whimbrel
Marbled Godwit
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
White-rumped Sandpiper
Pectoral Sandpiper
Dunlin
Stilt Sandpiper
Short-billed Dowitcher
Wilson’s Snipe
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull
Great Black-backed Gull
Least Tern
Caspian Tern
Common Tern
Forster’s Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Black Skimmer
Parasitic Jaeger
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo

Eastern Screech-Owl
Great Horned Owl
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-headed Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Empidonax sp.
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
White-eyed Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Tree Swallow

Carolina Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown-headed Nuthatch
House Wren
Carolina Wren
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow
New Members September 1 –November 4, 2013
The VSO bids a warm welcome to the following new members:

John Pancake and Ann Olson, Rockbridge Baths
Buck Kent, Augusta Springs
Hal Horwitz, Richmond
Sidney Sher, Manassas
Ms. Meriwether Payne, Locustville
Ann Kirk, Chesapeake,
Beth Morgan and Rich Scherer, Williamsburg
Brenda Frank, McLean

Ann and Gary Carpenter, Williamsburg
Middle Peninsula Bird Club, Gloucester
Leslie Fellows, Aylett,
Cathy Switzer, King George
Rusty Moran, Fairfax
Mike Lott, Fredericksburg
and behavior of birds stem from more than three decades of experience in the field and as a wildlife rehabilitator. In her talk, *The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds*, Julie will explain what happens when, by virtue of raising a bird that has been orphaned or hurt, you are taken into its confidence. It's about the unexpected mental and emotional capacities of birds, especially songbirds, which we tend to underestimate and overlook. Everyone knows that crows, ravens and parrots are intelligent, but have you thought about hummingbirds? Julie Zickefoose has a unique perspective, having been “mother” to six. Join her for an intimate, eye-opening look at the rich mental and emotional landscape of birds.

And, of course, there will be lots of great field trips. Spring birding in the northern Piedmont is always exciting with many excellent locations and a wide range of habitats in close proximity. Bordered by the Potomac River on the north and east and the Blue Ridge on the west, there are a number of hot spots including the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship, the Dulles Greenway Wetlands and the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve, Algonkian Regional Park, Bles Park, Sky Meadows, Huntley Meadows, the Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge, and many more.

The full weekend schedule and field trip descriptions will be in the spring issue of this newsletter and on the VSO Website www.virginiabirds.net.

**Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award**

A Call for Nominations

The Virginia Society of Ornithologists is seeking nominations for the Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award, given for outstanding work in conserving Virginia’s birds and/or the state’s natural areas. The award, a framed certificate acknowledging the accomplishments of the recipient, is presented at the VSO Annual Meeting. Nominations, including at least three letters of recommendation and a list of the nominee’s accomplishments, should be submitted to VSO’s Conservation Committee Chair, Patti Reum, at pareum@gmail.com no later than February 15, 2013. The Conservation Committee will make its recommendations to the VSO Board at its March meeting.

**Citizen Scientists Needed**

The Center for Conservation Biology is recruiting observers for OspreyWatch, a global community of observers focused on documenting breeding osprey. For more information go to http://www.osprey-watch.org/

The Holiday Inn at Historic Carradoc Hall, 1500 East Market Street, Leesburg, VA 20176, will be the meeting headquarters. A block of rooms has been reserved at a special rate of $99, plus tax. To get the special rate reservations must be made by March 26, using the code “VS1”. Room reservations can be made by calling 703 771-9200 and requesting the VSO annual conference rate or online by going to the reservations page at www.holidayinnleesburg.com and entering the code “VS1” when asked if you have a group code. There are other close-by lodging options as well as numerous restaurants in the area. A hot breakfast buffet will be available from 6:00 AM to 8:00 AM on April 27 and 28 but you will need to sign up ahead of time for one or both breakfasts using the VSO registration form.

To register for the conference, the banquet and/or the breakfast buffets use the registration form on page 7 or visit www.loudounwildlife.org/Event_VSO_Mtg_2013.html and pay with PayPal. The Registration Deadline is April 15.

In addition to good birds, Loudoun County offers a chance to glimpse into the past while enjoying delicious dining, exploring wineries, and shopping. Plan to come early or stay an extra day to make the most of your visit to Loudoun County.

For questions contact Joe Coleman at 540 554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.
The Virginia Society of Ornithology 2013 Annual Meeting  
April 26–28, 2013  
Registration Form

This form may be used to register one or two participants

Name 1: ___________________________ Name 2: ___________________________

Mailing address: ___________________________

Primary phone ___________________________ Secondary phone: ___________________________ 

Email address: ___________________________

Registration fee: Number (1 or 2) ____ X $40.00 = __________
Saturday morning buffet: Number (1 or 2) ____ X $12.00 = __________
Saturday evening banquet: Number (1 or 2) ____ X $35.00 = __________
Sunday morning buffet: Number (1 or 2) ____ X $12.00 = __________

Total Payment: __________

Please make check payable to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Mail completed form and check to Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, P.O. Box 2088, Purcellville, VA 20134 or go to www.loudounwildlife.org and click on VSO Annual Meeting.

Your registration form must be received by April 15, 2013 to guarantee registration for meals.

Registration fee includes all field trips and meeting activities except the banquet and buffets. Participants are responsible for their own lodging. A limited number of rooms are available at a reduced rate at the Holiday Inn Leesburg at Historic Curraheoc Hall. Room reservations must be made by March 26, 2013. Please visit loudounwildlife.org for news and updates.

Call for Papers — VSO 2013 Annual Meeting

The Virginia Society of Ornithology invites scientific presentations for its 2013 annual meeting to be held April 26-28 in Leesburg. Oral presentations should be 15 minutes long, including time for questions. Static displays (such as posters) will also be accepted space permitting. Submissions will be reviewed by a selection committee and added to the program until the schedule or display space is full. Please submit the following information about your poster or presentation no later than March 15, 2013:

- Oral presentation or poster?
- Presenting author’s name
- Presenting author’s contact information: postal address, email address, phone number
- Institutional affiliation (if applicable)
- Names of co-authors (if applicable)
- Title of poster or oral presentation
- Brief abstract (250 word limit)
- Audio-visual needs (e.g. laptop and LCD projector, overhead projector, slide projector)

Participants will be notified of their acceptance by March 22.

Send information (email preferred) to Andrew Dolby  
Email: adolby@umw.edu  
Phone: 540-654-1420  
FAX: 540-654-1081  
Postal address:  
Chair, Department of Biological Sciences  
University of Mary Washington  
1301 College Avenue  
Jepson Science Center 327  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
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