



# VSO Newsletter

A Publication of the Virginia Society of Ornithology

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## VSO Annual Meeting — A Resounding Success

The VSO Annual Meeting, hosted by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy in Leesburg from April 26 - 28, had over 175 participants. Andrew Dolby officially opened the business meeting on Friday evening and thanked the Loudon Wildlife Conservancy for hosting the event. VSO Treasurer Sue Thrasher presented her report (see page 3) and Past President Rexanne Bruno, chair of the nominating committee, presented the slate of nominees for officer and board member positions (page 3). As there were no nominations from the floor, the proposed slate was adopted by the membership.

The business meeting was followed by a program, “Identifying Warblers, the Jewels of the Eastern Forest”, which captured and held the audience’s attention. The program was presented by three former presidents of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, Mike Bowen, Linda Friedland,



VSO President Andrew Dolby presents the Mitchell A. Byrd Award to Dr. James Fraser at the Annual Meeting.

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Vol. 59 • No. 2  
Summer 2013

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### Dates to Remember

August 17–18, 2013  
Craney Island Trip

September 13–15, 2013  
VSO Fall Trip

## Dr. James Fraser Receives 2013 Mitchell A. Byrd Award

The 2013 recipient of the Mitchell A. Byrd Award for Scientific Achievement is Dr. James D. Fraser, Professor of Wildlife Sciences at Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech). The VSO selected Dr. Fraser for the award in recognition of his outstanding scientific record and the far-reaching effects of his work on Virginia’s birds.

After earning his Master’s Degree and PhD in wildlife biology from the University of Minnesota, he joined Virginia Tech’s faculty in 1981 as an Assistant Professor. He was the first author or co-author on over eighty scientific papers, and nearly all of his papers included graduate students. He obtained more than \$11 million in grants as the principal investigator and approximately \$1 million as a co-principal investigator. Much of his research focused on the Piping Plover, but his work has also touched Red Knots, Bald Eagles, Crested Caracaras, both Black and Turkey Vultures, and the Madagascar Fish Eagle.

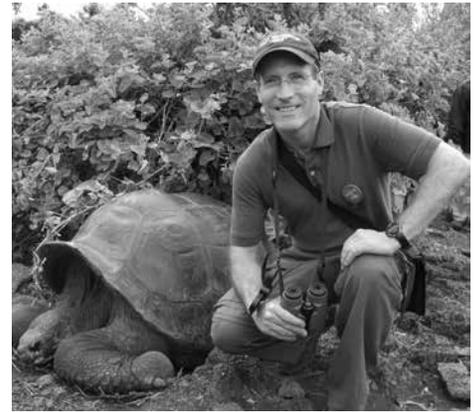
Dr. Fraser is an elective member of the American Ornithologists’ Union, has been active as an officer and chair of various committees for the Raptor Research Foundation, and is a past president of the Virginia Chapter of the Wildlife Society. Additionally, he has served on several other special committees and task forces dealing with the management of the mid-Atlantic’s coastal birds.

At Virginia Tech, Dr Fraser teaches Principles of Wildlife Management, Wildlife Ecology, Endangered Species Management, and Conservation of Biological Diversity and other courses. Some of his graduate students have won their own awards for excellence and have become outstanding scientists in their own right.

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# President's Message: Synergy

One of my neighbors is a German immigrant. He's one of my best friends and our families have virtually raised our children together. When the kids were younger, he and I would frequently babysit for each other when our wives were busy, take turns picking the kids up from after-school activities, or grab an item needed by the other while at the store. Each time I said thanks for something that he did for me, he repeated a phrase from home: "One hand washes the other"- a folksy German way to capture the essence of reciprocity. This saying goes a bit further, however, because it applies not only to mutually convenient exchanges, but suggests deeper interdependence, which one can understand if one actually attempts to wash only one hand without the aid of the other. I thought about this phrase as I considered what to say in my final President's Message before turning over the reins to Joe Coleman.



I think "one hand washes the other" nicely captures the interwoven relationships among the birders, educators, conservation biologists, and professional ornithologists who make up the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Through our partnerships with each we can best monitor, protect, and learn more about Virginia's birds. When it comes to stewardship of our birds, effective public policy depends on sound science, and science, in turn, depends upon the eyes and ears of hundreds of knowledgeable birders deployed around the state. Professional biologists identify pertinent questions and provide direction, while accountants, school teachers, and software engineers, who happen to be knowledgeable and passionate about birds, often then secure the data to answer those questions. We all contribute to education and citizen action on behalf of birds.

On a personal level, I consider my own "ornithology identity" to vacillate between professional academic and citizen birder. In addition to teaching ornithology at the University of Mary Washington, I teach five other courses. I run an ornithology research program, but my questions are narrow and rooted in physiology. Every time I go birding with friends, who happen to have different professions, I learn something new, and I often bring these nuggets back with me to the classroom. When I participate in the VSO Foray this year in Rockbridge County I will be proudly wearing my citizen scientist hat, not my academic hat. On the other hand, I can share details about bird biology that my birding friends may not already know. The point is that we work together...and when we identify ways to advance conservation, educate, or foster enthusiasm, we act together. Such collective effort has been critical to the VSO's successes, both past and present.

Let's keep this synergy going, and continue to inspire others to join the VSO because it's a worthy organization and does meaningful work for birds. I am looking forward to Joe Coleman's leadership and experience as we keep the VSO moving in this direction. Please join me in welcoming him to the presidency.

*Andrew*

## BYRD AWARD

*Continued from Page 1*

The Mitchell A. Byrd Award was established in 2011 and recognizes outstanding scientific achievement in the field of ornithology. Dr. Byrd is a College of William and Mary Professor Emeritus of Biology whose research career was key to the restoration of the eastern United States' Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon populations. Recipients of this award demonstrate such an exceptional record of contribution to the scientific knowledge of Virginia's birds.

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Send submissions electronically via e-mail whenever possible. Attach text as Word document or plain text file. Attach images as separate files; please do not imbed in email body. Send the largest file possible. The images will not print well if formatted smaller as for the web.

Submissions may be edited for style or length.

### 2013 Submission Schedule

Issue	Copy Due
Spring 2013	Jan 18
Summer 2013	May 17
Fall 2013	Aug 9
Winter 2013	Nov 1

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

# Larry Cartwright Receives Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award

The Abbott Conservation Award is given to an individual or organization for making significant contributions to the conservation of Virginia birds and their habitat. The award is named for Jackson M. Abbott who founded the Fort Belvoir Christmas Bird Count in 1941 and did extensive work to protect Bald Eagles in Virginia, especially in the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay.

The recipient of the 2013 award is Larry Cartwright in recognition of his work as an educator, survey participant and coordinator, record reporter, and field trip leader. He has long been active in the Friends of Dyke Marsh and Huntley Meadows, as a steward, trip leader, survey coordinator and participant in Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, has monitored both Bluebird and Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes and taught Field Ornithology at Northern Virginia Community College. He has also published in both *The Raven* and *Sialia* and is recognized as a vocal spokesman for birding issues to the media and the public.

- Patti Reum, VSO Conservation Committee Chair

## Virginia Society of Ornithology 2013 Officers and Board of Directors

### Officers

**President:** Joe Coleman  
**Vice President:** Jeff Trollinger  
**Past President:** Andrew Dolby  
**Treasurer:** Barbara Thrasher  
**Secretary:** Judith Weigand  
**Membership Secretary:** Shirley Devan  
**Editor, The Raven:** Wes Brown  
**Editors, Virginia Birds and the VSO Newsletter:**  
 Linda Fields and Alan Schreck

### Board of Directors, Class of 2016

**Bill Williams, Williamsburg**  
**Lenny Bankester, Arlington**  
**Daniel Bieker, North Garden**

### Board of Directors, Class of 2014 (replacement)

**Bruce Johnson, Lovettsville**

### VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY TREASURER'S REPORT CONDENSED 2012 CALENDAR YEAR

<b>BEGINNING BALANCES:</b>		<b>DISBURSEMENTS:</b>	
General Fund	\$43,108.51	General Fund	\$17,435.42
Restricted Funds	\$139,552.09	Endowment	750.00
Total	\$182,660.60	Murray Award	\$2,000.00
		Small Grants Conserv.	2,000.00
		Total	\$22,185.42
<b>RECEIPTS:</b>		<b>ENDING BALANCES:</b>	
Dues	\$14,300.00	General Fund	\$42,710.57
Other General	\$2,295.48	Restricted Funds	\$140,811.04
Designated Funds	\$442.00	<b>ENDING BALANCE</b>	<b>\$183,521.61</b>
Endowment Fund	\$529.18		
Life Memberships	\$500.00		
Murray Fund	\$4,660.07		
Small Grants Conservation Fund	\$319.70		
Total	\$23,046.43		

  
 Barbara S. Thrasher, Treasurer

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

# CONSERVATION CORNER

This month's guest author is Sarah Karpanty, an Associate Professor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech. Since 2004, she had been working on various projects related to the conservation of migratory and breeding shorebirds.



## Virginia is for Red Knot Lovers!

Next spring if you are getting packed and ready to travel up the coast to the Delaware Bay to take in the phenomenon of spring shorebird migration, first pause and consider a stop a bit closer to home for an equally phenomenal and breath-taking view of the migration in the Virginia Coast Reserve.

Our team at Virginia Tech, which I co-lead with my colleague Dr. Jim Fraser, has been working in coastal Virginia, in partnership with scientists at The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the College of William & Mary, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, to study the stopover ecology of Red Knots and other shorebirds on the roughly 85 kilometers of nearly undeveloped shoreline between Fisherman's Island and Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, also known as the Virginia Coast Reserve (VCR). Each spring between mid-April and early June, tens of thousands of shorebirds stop in the VCR to replenish the fat supply needed to take them the final 2000-4000 kilometers to their Arctic and sub-Arctic breeding sites. Our data for the last eight years indicates that the two most numerous shorebird spring migrants in the VCR are the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) and the Sanderling (*Calidris alba*).

The *rufa* Red Knot, which has declined dramatically since the mid-1990s and is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, migrates the longest distance of the VCR shorebird migrants from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic, in several long

flights. Knots spend two to three weeks on spring stopover in the mid-Atlantic. The current mid-Atlantic stopover of Red Knots occurs primarily on the Delaware Bay and in Virginia. We have documented that each year approximately 35% of all *rufa* Red Knots stop and refuel on our Virginia islands. While knots on the Delaware Bay feast on eggs of the spawning horseshoe crab, knots in Virginia feed primarily on small bivalves, as do most Red Knots throughout their global range; horseshoe crabs are an anomaly, not their typical food source.

Given the importance of Virginia as an alternative stopover to the Delaware Bay, and our finding that while in Virginia knots feast on bivalves, much of our work is focused on understanding the relationships between Red Knots, other shorebirds, and the bivalve prey. Of particular interest is the need to understand the implications of climate change on these bivalve prey, and thus the potential impacts on migrating shorebirds. As water temperatures rise, the breeding timing and travelling of food items such as mussel spat and other larvae also changes. Thus, small shifts in the phenology of bivalves related to climate change could have major implications for the ability of shorebirds to successfully refuel; this is the focus of our ongoing and future work in the Virginia Coast Reserve.

For more information, please contact Sarah Karpanty at [karpanty@vt.edu](mailto:karpanty@vt.edu) or 540 231-4586.

Summer 2013

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## Special VSO Field Trip Craney Island August 17 and 18, 2013



Back by popular demand, two special half-day VSO field trips to Craney Island will be held on August 17 and 18. The leaders Ruth Beck, Brian Taber, Dave Youker and Alex Minarik have many years of experience conducting research and birding in 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 this trip, but you must be a VSO member to participate. Craney Island has been a favorite birding spot for many of Virginia's 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 consists of approximately 2,500 acres for the management of dredged material. It 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. Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Western Willet, Stilt Sandpiper, Upland Sandpiper, Red-necked Phalarope, Wilson's Phalarope and Black Tern were among the species seen on last year's trips. Participants will meet at 8:00 AM at the MAIN entrance of Craney Island and bird until noon. Carpooling is very important in order to limit vehicular traffic for safety purposes.

To register, contact VSO field trip co-chair Lee Adams at 540-850-0777 or [leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com](mailto:leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com) specifying your preferred date. The trips are expected to fill up so early registrations is encouraged. 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://www.virginiabirds.net/join.html> or on the back page of this newsletter.

# VSO Fall Field Trip Chincoteague, VA September 13–15, 2013

## DEADLINE FOR SPECIAL ROOM RATE IS AUGUST 13 RESERVATIONS REQUIRED FOR WASH FLATS BUS TRIP

The VSO annual fall trip to Chincoteague offers the chance to see many species of waterfowl, shorebirds and migrating songbirds.

### Trip Registration

Please register in advance by providing the names of participants and a contact telephone number and email address to Meredith Bell at [merandlee@gmail.com](mailto:merandlee@gmail.com) or 804 824-4958. If registering for one of the Wash Flat trips (see below), indicate your preferred day. Notify the trip coordinator if you need to cancel so space is available for someone else

### Headquarters

The Refuge Inn on Beach Road will be the host hotel (800 544-8469 or 757 336-5511). Room rates are \$108 (plus tax) per night for a single or a 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 \$92. The Refuge Motor Inn is non-smoking and no pets are allowed. To assure the VSO rate, make reservations by August 13, stating you are with the VSO.

### Meals

Meals are on your own. The Refuge Inn offers a complimentary continental breakfast for guests and will open at 7:00 AM. There are number of restaurants 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 Evening

An evening orientation and slide program, including a preview of birds in the area and a synopsis of the field trips, will be presented in the conference room by trip leaders Jerry Via and Bill Akers. Due the size of the room there will be two sessions, one at 8:00 PM and one at 9:00 PM.

### Saturday Field Trips

A variety of field trips will be offered 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” (Saturday only) to explore the wildlife loop, which is closed to cars until 3:00 PM, making it a safe, easy ride. Bikes can be rented at the shop next to the Refuge Inn.

### Wash Flats Bus Trip – Advance Registration Required

There will be two bus trips to the Wash Flats, one at 1:00 PM on Saturday, and one at 9:00 AM on Sunday. This is a restricted area in the refuge where shorebirds and raptors are often abundant. The bus has a capacity for 30 people. 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 (see information under Trip Registration above). Payments will be taken at the conference room on Friday. This is a popular trip and fills up quickly; early registration is recommended.

### Saturday Evening

There will be a tally of the day’s species late in the afternoon in the conference room.

### Sunday Morning

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

### Other Lodging in the Area

Motels located close to the Refuge Motor Inn include the Best Western (800 553-6117), the Blue Heron Inn (757 336-1900) and the Sea Hawk (757 336-6527).

**For additional information about lodging and restaurant options**, the Chincoteague Website: can be found at [www.chincoteaguechamber.com](http://www.chincoteaguechamber.com).



# New Members January 18–May 2, 2013

The VSO bids a warm welcome to the following new members:

Jim Corliss, Williamsburg, VA  
Sergio Harding, Richmond, VA  
Christine Boran, Woolwine, VA  
Linda Millington, Upperville, VA  
Carol Sottili, Fairfax Station, VA  
Phil Silas, Woodbridge, VA  
Cheryl Jacobson, Williamsburg, VA  
Mike and Marcella Fruchter, Fairfax, VA  
Dr. Susan Heath, Lake Jackson, TX  
Keith Roberts, Chesapeake, VA  
Jan Lockwood, Williamsburg, VA  
Catherine Millar, Williamsburg, VA  
Phil & Ellie Daley, Lincoln, VA  
Katherine & Mark Wychulis, Arlington, VA

W. B. Smith, Burke, VA  
Ana Arguelles, Alexandria, VA  
Jerry and Nerine Hickman, Gloucester, VA  
Eric Walters, Portsmouth, VA  
Susan Titus, Richardsville, VA  
Carl Hansen, Radford, VA  
Dr. and Mrs. Larry Underwood, Manassas, VA  
Beverly Bruck, Lexington, VA  
Mr and Mrs Fletcher Bingham, Bridgewater, VA  
John Alcock, Marshall, VA  
Otto and Debra Gutenson, Lovettsville, VA  
David White, Charlottesville, VA  
Ed Spooner, Dahlgren, VA  
Marcia Lyons, Buxton, NC

## News and Notes from the Local Chapters

This column provides a venue for VSO 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](http://www.virginiabirds.net/chaps.html). Send items for News and Notes to Joe Coleman, VSO Vice-President, at [jcoleman@loudonwildlife.org](mailto:jcoleman@loudonwildlife.org).

The **Eastern Shore Bird Club**, which meets in Onancock on alternate months, had an engaging slate of speakers this year before breaking for the summer. VSO President Andrew Dolby got the season off to an earlier-than-usual start with his August 2012 program on Bird Migration. In September, David Bryan of the Virginia Department and Inland Fish talked about the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI), including tips for increasing Bobwhite habitat on private property. (The NBCI website is full of good information on why the species is declining and what's being done on a regional scale for bobwhite conservation: <http://bringbackbobwhites.org>).

Their January program featured guest speaker, Joelle Gehring, who earned her doctorate from Michigan State University, studying which factors are most associated with fatal bird collisions. She found tall towers (>1,000 feet) and towers with guy wires clearly caused higher bird mortality than towers under 480 feet high or un-guyed towers. Since she thought tower heights and guy wires would be hard to change she designed a follow-up study looking at the effects of lighting systems. Since migrating birds are often attracted to lighted towers, especially during foggy nights, she had a hunch that the color of lights and their flashing pattern could make a difference. She observed lower bird mortality around towers that had either red or white flashing lights, as compared to towers that had steady burning lights. She concluded that eliminating steady-burning red lights, which are a leftover from an antiquated Federal Aviation Administration safety regulation, could save birds. In another study, Gehring and her colleagues worked with a tower owner to adjust the flash rate to

one that was conspicuous enough for pilots and bird-friendly. Bird club members were held spell-bound by Gehring's compelling tale of her research and cheered what could only be described as a happy ending....or better put, a beginning. Gehring had just accepted a new position with the Federal Communication Commission, the agency that grants licenses to communication tower operators. Her main job will be to work with tower operators to implement changes to reduce bird collisions. (For more information on Gehring's research or how you can take action to reduce lighting on a tower near you, visit her website at: <http://fewerlights.anr.msu.edu/index.html>.)

Two teams with a total of seven birders from the **Williamsburg Bird Club** competed in the first annual Birding Cup sponsored April 13 by the Virginia Living Museum in Newport News. The Birding Cup is a fundraising activity for birders on the Virginia Peninsula to find as many species as possible in 24 hours in the area stretching from Williamsburg to Hampton. The Bird Dog team, with Williamsburg Bird Club and VSO members Geoff Giles, Jim Corliss, and John and Marilyn Adair, tallied 95 species and came in second place to the Eagle Eyes with 97 species. The Wren Wrustlers, with Bird Club and VSO members Jeanette Navia, Jan Lockwood, and Shirley Devan, tallied 75 species but won the prize for raising the most money for the museum. The prize, a pair of Eagle Optics 8 x 42 binoculars, was raffled off as a door prize at the May 15 Bird Club meeting to raise funds for scholarships for local youth to attend Nature Camp and for William & Mary graduate students.

**Of General Interest**, due to heavy rains in early May, a number of phalaropes showed up in parts of the state they are rarely seen including four Red-Necked Phalaropes and one Red Phalarope in the Stuarts Draft area of Augusta County.

- Joe Coleman, VSO Vice President

## Blue Ridge Young Birders Club

In 2012, Eve Gaige and 13 year-old Gabriel Mapel had the idea for a young birders club to help support and encourage Virginia's young birders. At the organizational meeting in Charlottesville in October 2012, four young people formed the Blue Ridge Young Birders Club. They selected the Great Horned Owl as their club bird and Max Nootbaar created a beautiful drawing to use as their logo. With the support of Eve Gaige, Mary Mapel, and other parents and adult helpers, the boys are in the process of filing for non-profit status.

They have also made multiple field trips, even joining with Fred Atwood's Northern Virginia Teen Birders Club for a day of birding in the Shenandoah Valley. With Fred's group they found a Golden Eagle, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Lapland Longspur which was describes as "a really awesome bird around here."

In December of last year they were invited to talk to a 4-H group about bird watching, teaching the next generation about birds.

This spring they have taken over, refurbished, and added to a Bluebird nest box trail at the Piedmont Community College grounds in Charlottesville. Club members are taking turns monitoring the trail every week and are happy to report that as of the end of April, all boxes have activity.

Club Secretary Andrew Rapp says they want to inform other birders about their club and to discover more young birders even if they don't live in central Virginia. He asks that young birder contact them at [info@blueridgeyoungbirders.org](mailto:info@blueridgeyoungbirders.org) . Information regarding how to help this fledgling club can be found on their website at [http://blueridgeyoungbirders.org/Blue\\_Ridge\\_Young\\_Birders/Welcome.html](http://blueridgeyoungbirders.org/Blue_Ridge_Young_Birders/Welcome.html).



*Blue Ridge Bird Club's founding members - Warwick Dutnell, Andrew Rapp, Max Nootbaar, and Gabriel Mapel with the club's logo.*

## 2013 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 given to promote undergraduate and graduate research 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. The award is supported by an endowment fund, individual contributions, and a generous matching grant by the Northern Neck of Virginia Audubon Society.

This year's recipients are Vitek Jirinec and Anna Tucker. Mr. Jirinec's project is entitled, "Wood Thrush habitat selection at the home range scale: implications for local distribution." He is a Master of Science candidate at the College of William and Mary, and is working under the guidance of Dr. Matthias Leu. Ms. Tucker's her project is entitled, "Fitness costs and benefits of conspecific brood parasitism in a cavity-nesting warbler," focusing on the Prothonotary Warbler. She is a Master of Science student at Virginia Commonwealth University, and is working under the guidance of Dr. Lesley Bulluck.

This year's judges were Mark Fink, Associate Professor of Biology and Chair of the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences at Longwood University, Dr. Judy Guinan, Associate Professor of Biology at Radford University, and Dr. Charles Ziegenfuss, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Adjunct Professor of Biology at James Madison University.

The VSO's J. J. Murray Research Award is supported by an endowment fund, and contributions to the fund are a way individuals can play a role in supporting this worthwhile endeavor. For more information please contact Gene Sattler at [gsattler@liberty.edu](mailto:gsattler@liberty.edu) or 582-2229.

*- Gene Sattler*

# 2013 Annual Meeting

*Continued from Page 1*

and Jim Nelson. It featured nearly every warbler that breeds or migrates through Virginia and Maryland emphasizing ID pointers and songs of the warblers as they appear in our area in spring.

The 17 field trips held on Friday afternoon and Saturday and Sunday morning gave everyone an opportunity to hone their birding skills with visits to great locations like Blandy Farm and Silver Lake. One of the trips took place in Maryland along the C&O Canal and another piggy-backed on a Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society field trip to Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge.

A total of 140 bird species were found on the field trips and by individuals exploring some Loudoun County areas near the hotel on their own; daily total were 89 for Friday, 118 for Saturday, and 101 for Sunday. With so many field trips and so many birders it's impossible to identify all of the highlights but they included Common Mergansers checking out cavities along the C&O Canal, two Horned Grebes, an American Bittern and a Black-billed Cuckoo at the Dulles Greenway Wetlands, a recently fledged still downy Barred Owl at Ball's Bluff, Cliff Swallows on one of the Rte 50 bridges over the Shenandoah River, 20 warbler species including several well-seen Cerulean Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers, White-crowned Sparrows, a late Dark-eyed Junco, and a fair amount of nesting behavior. The Occoquan National Wildlife Refuge was interesting as several species were only seen there or seen in much larger quantities there than anywhere else. Additional species found by individuals on their own were Great Horned Owl and blue Grosbeak.

At Saturday afternoon's technical paper session people heard about modeling flight routes of Golden Eagles from Andrew Dennhardt. A citizen science effort on the effects on bird diversity of different grassland management practices was described by Amy Johnson and Courtney Turrin discussed breeding bird responses to intraspecific territorial intrusion by Bald Eagles. Margaret Whitney's paper was on the depuration and recovery from methylmercury in European Starlings and Andrew Dolby's presentation was a comparative analysis of physiological stress indicators in Tufted Titmouse.

On Saturday evening 145 people gathered for the banquet. Julie Zickefoose's presentation was the banquet highlight, and some would argue, the meeting's highlight. Ms. Zickefoose, a widely published natural history writer and artist with over three decades of observing the natural history and behavior of birds, held the audience spellbound as she shared a number of fascinating stories. She emphasized observations that appear in her most recently published book, *The Bluebird Effect: Uncommon Bonds with Common Birds*, in which she explains the unexpected mental and emotional capacities of birds, especially songbirds.

The banquet concluded with the presentation of several awards. Larry Cartwright received the Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award, given for outstanding work in conserving Virginia's birds and/or the state's natural areas. Jim Fraser was the recipient of the 2013 Mitchell A. Byrd Award, given for outstanding scientific achievement in the field of ornithology. The J. J. Murray Research Award was given to Anna Tucker and Vitek Jirinec to support their ornithological research.

~Joe Coleman  
VSO Vice President



*This young Barred Owl was found on one of the many VSO Annual Meeting field trips. Photo by Nicole Hamilton.*

# News From VARCOM

## Virginia Avian Records Committee Seeks Nominations for Voting Members

**Submission deadline October 1, 2013**

The Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) is soliciting nominations for voting members of the committee. Members review records of bird sightings submitted to VARCOM and vote on their acceptance. The duties of committee members are outlined in section III.c.3 of VARCOM's bylaws at [http://www.virginiabirds.net/varcom\\_bylaws.html](http://www.virginiabirds.net/varcom_bylaws.html). VARCOM members serve for four years.

Any VSO member may nominate a person to serve on VARCOM. The nominee must have expertise in the field identification of birds and their distribution, accept VARCOM's rules, and be a member in good standing of the VSO. It is the responsibility of the nominator to obtain the agreement of the nominee to be nominated prior to submitting the nomination.

Nominations, including a paragraph of information supporting the nomination, should be submitted to VARCOM Chair, Robert Ake, 6603 Catherine Street, Norfolk VA 23505 or [rake@cox.net](mailto:rake@cox.net). The submission deadline is October 1, 2013. The new class of voting members of VARCOM will be elected by VARCOM and approved by the Board of the VSO.

- Robert Ake, VARCOM Chair

## New VARCOM Website

The Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM) has a new Website, developed by VSO member Arun Bose, with input and review from the entire Committee. It can be found at

<http://www.virginiabirds.net/varcom.html>.

Highlights include updated official species and review lists, an archive of annual reports, a list of committee members, and the VARCOM ByLaws. But, most of all, it features a beautiful new layout with much enhanced readability.

Thanks Arun, for a great piece of work!

- Wendy Ealding, VARCOM Secretary

## Why does the Virginia checklist keep changing and why can't I buy it anymore?

The VSO is no longer printing and selling copies of the field checklist. Instead the checklist is available as a free download on the home page of the VSO Website at [www.virginiabirds.net](http://www.virginiabirds.net).

The reasoning behind this decision is that in recent years there have been many changes to the checklist and it is difficult to keep printed copies current. The sale of checklists in the past has always been revenue neutral to VSO, in that the charge was only intended to cover the cost of printing the checklists. With frequent changes, it is impractical to do the large print run needed to make the lists available at a reasonable cost since the list would be out of date before the inventory was exhausted.

There are several reasons why the list changes so often. First as part of its scientific mission, the VSO follows the most current taxonomic sequence as determined by the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) and that sequence has been changing frequently in recent years... for those who can't find the falcons on the latest list, they are now after the woodpeckers. Additionally, sometimes there are lumps and splits and name changes that affect the Virginia list. Then pretty much every year, we add new species to the list – the latest additions being Brewer's Sparrow and Black-tailed Godwit. These new species go on to the "back of the page" list of species that have few accepted records. Finally, as we accept more records of these rare species, some of them reach the threshold to be promoted to the regular list.

We plan to publish a new version of the checklist annually to reflect these changes and make it available online by the first of each year so that you will have the most current version available to start your annual lists.

- Wendy Ealding, VARCOM Secretary



# VSO Outer Banks Field Trip Report

It was a fantastic weekend for the 80 birders who participated in the VSO field trip to the Outer Banks on February 1–3. Despite very windy conditions on Friday and chilly temperatures for the weekend, 131 species were tallied for the three days with the help of trip leaders Lee Adams, Lee Bell, Bill Akers, and Jerry Via. Joining the group were 10 James Madison University students and their professor Zig Ziegenfus.

The Friday trip to Lake Mattamuskeet was once again a huge hit, with almost 60 participants and 95 species identified by the two groups led by Lee Adams, and Meredith and Lee Bell. There were excellent views of Black-crowned Night Herons roosting in a single tree near the Visitor's Center. Ducks were plentiful, and two hybrids were found: American Black Duck x Mallard and Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and a Black & White Warbler made it seem almost like spring. Six warbler and six woodpecker species were seen. Lee Adams led a group to Alligator River NWR near dusk and several people got the target bird, a Short-eared Owl. Also spotted there were Wilson's Snipe, Peregrine Falcon, Cooper's Hawk and several Northern Harriers.

The winds were calmer on Saturday and temperatures were chilly but the sunny conditions most of the day made it more comfortable. Behind the hotel there was a huge number of Bonaparte's Gulls but only a few Northern Gannets compared to recent years. Red-throated and Common Loons were seen, and there were two large rafts of Red-breasted Merganser. Some folks got to see an Iceland Gull on Saturday, and just about everyone enjoyed the Fin and Humpback whales that could easily be viewed from the hotel deck and room balconies.

A favorite spot on Saturday were New Fields pull-off areas south of Pea Island for viewing birds in South Pond and Bodie Island. At New Fields, there were dozens of Snow Geese right by the road. On the water were lots of American Avocet, American White Pelican, Tundra Swan, and hundreds of ducks. Arriving at Bodie Island in the late afternoon with the sun coming from behind the observation deck provided spectacular views of waterfowl and shore birds. A Virginia Rail was heard and a Clapper Rail was seen out in the open at the end of the day.

On Sunday exploring Alligator River for a few hours produced quite a showing of raptors including eight Northern Harriers in a single field at one point. Near the maintenance building everyone had great looks at a Merlin perched in a nearby tree and a Pine Warbler was heard singing. Also observed were Bald Eagle, American Kestrel, Red-tailed Hawk, Wilson's Snipe, Savannah Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks. Another great find was three Rusty Blackbirds.

*-Meredith Bell, VSO Field Trip Co-chair, Hayes, VA*

## Trip List

Snow Goose	Common Loon	Black-bellied Plover
Canada Goose	Pied-billed Grebe	Killdeer
Tundra Swan	Horned Grebe	American Oystercatcher
Wood Duck	Red-necked Grebe	American Avocet
Gadwall	Northern Gannet	Greater Yellowlegs
American Wigeon	Double-crested Cormorant	Willet
American Black Duck	American White Pelican	Lesser Yellowlegs
Mallard	Brown Pelican	Marbled Godwit
American Black Duck x Mallard (hybrid)	American Bittern	Ruddy Turnstone
Blue-winged Teal	Great Blue Heron	Sanderling
Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal (hybrid)	Great Egret	Western Sandpiper
Cinnamon Teal	Snowy Egret	Dunlin
Northern Shoveler	Little Blue Heron	Short-billed Dowitcher
Northern Pintail	Tri-colored Heron	Wilson's Snipe
Green-winged Teal	Black-crowned Night-Heron	Bonaparte's Gull
Canvasback	White Ibis	Ring-billed Gull
Ring-necked Duck	Black Vulture	Herring Gull
Lesser Scaup	Turkey Vulture	Less Black-backed Gull
Black Scoter	Northern Harrier	Great Black-backed Gull
Bufflehead	Bald Eagle	Forster's Tern
Hooded Merganser	Red-shouldered Hawk	Rock Pigeon
Red-breasted Merganser	Red-tailed Hawk	Mourning Dove
Ruddy Duck	Clapper Rail	Great Horned Owl
Red-throated Loon	Virginia Rail	Belted Kingfisher
	American Coot	Red-bellied Woodpecker

*Continued on Page 11*



*Outer Banks trip participants received a warm welcome from the hotel and local avian greeters. Photos by Dot Silsby, Newport News.*



**Trip List Continued** *from Page 10*

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker  
 Downy Woodpecker  
 Hairy Woodpecker  
 Northern Flicker  
 Pileated Woodpecker  
 American Kestrel  
 Merlin  
 Eastern Phoebe  
 Blue Jay  
 American Crow  
 Tree Swallow  
 Carolina Chickadee  
 Tufted Titmouse  
 Red-breasted Nuthatch  
 White-breasted Nuthatch  
 Brown-headed Nuthatch  
 Brown Creeper  
 Carolina Wren  
 Winter Wren  
 Sedge Wren

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher  
 Golden-crowned Kinglet  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
 Eastern Bluebird  
 Hermit Thrush  
 American Robin  
 Gray Catbird  
 Northern Mockingbird  
 Brown Thrasher  
 European Starling  
 Cedar Waxwing  
 Black-and-white Warbler  
 Orange-crowned Warbler  
 Common Yellowthroat  
 Palm Warbler  
 Pine Warbler  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler  
 Eastern Towhee  
 Field Sparrow  
 Chipping Sparrow

Savannah Sparrow  
 Song Sparrow  
 Swamp Sparrow  
 White-throated Sparrow  
 Dark-eyed Junco  
 Northern Cardinal  
 Red-winged Blackbird  
 Eastern Meadowlark  
 Rusty Blackbird  
 Common Grackle  
 Boat-tailed Grackle  
 House Finch  
 American Goldfinch

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I would like to make an additional donation to:  
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If you have been an "Active" or "Family" member in the past, consider renewing at the "Sustaining Level" or the Contributing" level - or becoming a Life Member!

**VSO Sales Items**  
 \_\_\_\_ Virginia's Birdlife "Gold Book" Rottenborn, Brinkley 2007 \$20.00  
 \_\_\_\_ VSO Arm Patch \$4.00  
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**Please return this form with your check, payable to the VSO, to:**  
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As always, your support means so much to the success of the VSO. Thank you!!