



VSO Newsletter

A Publication of the Virginia Society of Ornithology

Website www.virginiabirds.net • eBird ebird.org/content/va/ • Facebook Virginia Society of Ornithology

Listserve mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/va-bird

**Registration
Required**

Reminder: The VSO Annual Meeting is April 24-27

**Special room
rate available – reserve
by March 24**

This year's meeting will be an exciting, one-of-a-kind, joint event with The Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival. Field trips and other birding festival activities will kick off at 7:00 AM on April 24 and will conclude on Sunday morning, April 27. Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge biologists will deliver a fascinating illustrated presentation on the refuge's wildlife on Friday night. Alicia King, Communication Coordinator and Urban Bird Treaty Program Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Migratory Bird Program, will be Saturday night's banquet speaker.

Hotel Information

The VSO Headquarters will be the Springhill Suites Inn Chesapeake Greenbrier. The VSO rate is \$99 per night. Additional rooms will be available at Aloft Chesapeake, which is next door to the Springhill Suites, also at \$99 per night. Both hotels offer complimentary breakfast. Reservations must be made by phone no later than March 24, 2014 in order to get the special rate. For Springhill Suites reservations, call 800 228-9290. For Aloft reservations, call 866 716-8143.

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Spring 2014

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Dates to Remember

April 24–27, 2014
VSO Annual Meeting

May 31, 2014
Piney Grove Trip

June 6–8, 2014
VSO Summer Trip

June 7–15, 2014
VSO Foray



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Photo by Susan Brown

2014 VSO Foray Will Be in the Dragon Run Area

The 2014 VSO Foray will be held in Middlesex and King & Queen Counties this year, on June 7–15. These counties border the beautiful Dragon Run, well-known as an “ecological gem.” While participants won't be able to kayak the run itself, as the water level will be too low by June, the area around it will be good for birding. If anyone is interested in surveying by kayaking, the foray area is flanked by the Rappahannock and Mattaponi Rivers. There are also a number of places where water birds can be found from land. These two counties are not heavily populated, so offer an abundance of woods and farmland. In addition, the Nature Conservancy has recently protected a large tract of forest. Along with the lands already protected by Friends of Dragon Run or the state, there are now over twenty thousand acres that are protected in the watershed. The foray area is easily accessible as a day trip from many of Virginia's metropolitan areas, so it's possible to participate without a large commitment of time if need be. We will get together once or twice during the foray for a “tally” of how the foray is going if there's enough interest. If you think you might like to participate, please email Susan Brown at susanbb@umich.edu.

President's Message: Conservation

Over the past few years several of us have been thinking about the best way for the Virginia Society of Ornithology to pursue its mission "To promote the development, protection and conservation of bird life and other natural resources."

We already honor deserving individuals or organizations with a conservation award, give grants of \$500 to \$1,000 to groups and individuals through our Conservation Fund, and also weigh in on a variety of conservation issues, but we know we could do more. Many of the letters we write are in support of issues that have been raised by the American Bird Conservancy, the most effective organization in this country in protecting birds and the habitats they need. But is it enough for VSO to write a letter in support of these issues or should we rally our membership to also write letters and speak out? We decided some time back that VA-Bird, the list server VSO pays for and manages, should be reserved for bird sightings and not be a forum for conservation issues. While Maryland's birding list server has a similar policy, the Maryland Ornithological Society's Conservation Chair does, on a very limited basis, post information on conservation issues with the understanding that they are simply information items, not the opening of long conversations — should we do the same? Others have suggested VSO should create a list serve dedicated to bird conservation in Virginia. I would appreciate hearing from you, the VSO membership, on what you would like us to do.

For example, many of us are very disturbed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to grant 30-year eagle take permits at wind energy projects. It is hard to believe that a technology that has the potential to kill so many birds and bats is considered green and will not only be allowed to do this but will receive tax breaks for doing so. While VSO has objected to this action, shouldn't we also ask our membership to speak out on this issue?

Closer to home, the Fish and Wildlife Service has acknowledged that a proposed Delmarva wind project may kill 20 eagles per year but FWS will still probably issue take permits so the project may move forward. Even worse is the consideration being given to allow wind turbines on Lake Erie in an area that has some of the highest concentrations of migratory birds in North America.

Bird populations have declined substantially over the years for a variety of reasons and if we want to continue to enjoy birds, we will need to do more to make sure what is left is protected. That will include not only speaking out but encouraging the preservation of habitat and stopping actions that harm birds by working closely with organizations like the American Bird Conservancy.

Joe Coleman

President, Virginia Society of Ornithology



Editors: Linda Fields and Alan Schreck 1573 21st Court North Arlington, VA 22209 <i>vseditors@comcast.net</i> Change of Address and requests for electronic delivery: Virginia Society of Ornithology PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188 <i>vsomembership@cox.net</i>	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.	2014 Submission Schedule <table><thead><tr><th>Issue</th><th>Copy Due</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Spring 2014</td><td>Jan 24</td></tr><tr><td>Summer 2014</td><td>May 23</td></tr><tr><td>Fall 2014</td><td>Aug 8</td></tr><tr><td>Winter 2014</td><td>Oct 24</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>Bird reports in this newsletter may not have been approved by VAR-COM (The Virginia Avian Records Committee).</p>	Issue	Copy Due	Spring 2014	Jan 24	Summer 2014	May 23	Fall 2014	Aug 8	Winter 2014	Oct 24
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CONSERVATION CORNER

Masked and banded in black, with yellow crown and epaulets, the Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) is among North America's most charismatic songbirds. Once abundant throughout Appalachia, this species has experienced precipitous declines in the southern extant of its range. The loss of its preferred habitat—shrubby early successional zones bordering forest—has been the primary source of this decline. Competition and interbreeding with the expanding Blue-winged Warbler (with which it hybridizes) has contributed to range contractions.



In Virginia, Golden-winged Warblers only breed in a handful of high-elevation counties, with the largest remaining populations in Bath and Highland Counties. A 2010 survey in Highland County by Professor Lesley Bulluck (PhD) of Virginia Commonwealth University found many areas of suitable early-successional habitat in these counties. However, many of these patches were not occupied by Golden-winged Warblers, begging the questions: why aren't Golden-wings using all the habitat available to them?

Avian conservation has traditionally focused on habitat management, operating under the premise that birds will utilize habitats created to suit their needs. However, over the last two decades, ecologists have explored social components to birds' habitat selection. Many species will use the presence of individuals of their own species (conspecifics) as an indicator of habitat quality (i.e., whether the local environment is suitable for breeding). Scientists have demonstrated in many species that birds can be more effectively attracted to new habitat patches by broadcasting recordings of breeding song during late summer and early spring. This strategy for recruiting songbirds has been dubbed "conspecific attraction."

However, the majority of these experiments have been done in a relatively small spatial scale with birds already in medium-to-high densities. Many threatened populations, such as the Golden-winged Warblers in Highland County, are distributed in low densities over broad spatial scales.

To test whether conspecific attraction can work under such conditions, Professor Bulluck and I implemented an experiment in which we broadcast breeding song in late summer 2012 and early spring of 2013 in under-occupied patches of suitable habitat, and monitored recruitment during the breeding season of 2013. Our preliminary results indicate that, over broad spatial scales, Golden-winged Warblers were not recruited to our broadcast song, although there may have been localized response in some patches. These findings can help inform conservationists when conspecific attraction will be an effective means to recruit birds.

None of this work would have been possible without the support of Sergio Harding of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. We are likewise indebted to the generous landowners in Highland County who allowed us to survey for warblers on their properties throughout 2012 and 2013, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology, whose financial support allowed us to update our broadcast equipment to make it reliable throughout the snows and thaws of the Highland County Spring. Finally, special thanks is owed to Patti Reum, who acted as both local liaison and tireless warbler advocate in Highland County.

Dan Allbrecht-Mallinger

Mr. Allbrecht-Mallinger, Masters degree student at VCU, received a conservation grant from the VSO in 2013.

New Members November 4, 2013 to January 24, 2014

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

John Huth, Boones Mill, VA

Nancy Barnhart, Williamsburg, VA

Elizabeth Fedorko, Falls Church, VA

Claire Curcio, Fredericksburg, VA

Eileen Stephens, Earlysville, VA

Howard Bergman, Alexandria, VA

Michelle McKenzie, Charlottesville, VA

Katherine Beard, Free Union, VA

Todd and Nell Fredericksen, Ferrum, VA

Peter Kelly, Annandale, VA

David Govoni, Nokesville, VA

Rupert Cutler, Roanoke, VA

A Downing, Fincastle, VA

David West, Newport News, VA

Michelle McKenzie, Charlottesville, VA

Margaret Rommen and Pat Ward, Virginia Beach, VA

Pamela Wefel, Blue Ridge, VA

Robert Peterman, Yorktown, VA

George Davis, Blacksburg, VA

Elizabeth Ward, Richmond, VA

Report of the 2013 VSO Virginia Beach Trip

The winter 2013 VSO Virginia Beach weekend started off on a summery note with temperatures rising close to 80 on the Pleasure House Point walk . Rexanne Bruno led the way pointing out birds and sharing some of the history of the area. Among the afternoon's highlights were three Osprey at one time, a Bald Eagle being harassed by a Crow, a Red-tailed Hawk, Sanderlings and Dunlin, and Clapper Rails calling in the marsh.

Many people made their way to see the King Eider under the 14th Street pier in Virginia Beach after the Pleasure House Point walk. Fortunately it was a crowd pleaser giving a good show while foraging among the pilings near a flock of Bufflehead.

Saturday morning participants divided into two groups, led by Russ Taylor and Rexanne Bruno, headed off to the the very, very windy and intermittently wet Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands. Observations included Black, Surf and White-winged Scoters, Common and Red-throated Loons, Long-tailed Ducks, Northern Gannets, Purple Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones, a Great Cormorant, a Goldfinch, and a Harbor Seal. After lunch some people gathered at Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge visitor center, then drove to Fisherman's Island for a walk, which included sightings of Turkey and Black Vultures, White Ibis, Snowy Egrets, Black-crowned Night-Herons, American Wigeon, Black Ducks, Hooded Mergansers, Flickers, American Kestrel, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Northern Harrier. Clapper Rails were heard.

Sunday's tram trip at Back Bay NWR was wet and very cold. Rain blew horizontally at times and the wind howled constantly but participants were treated to some interesting finds. Two Wilson's Snipe posed in the open close to the tram. An American Bittern slowly stalked along the edge of a sheltered island in full view. In a beautiful wintry scene Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, and an assortment of ducks plied the waters of the coves and impoundments. Several flocks of Snow Geese flew over. Northern Harriers hunted and a Bald Eagle watched all.

*-Lee Adams
Trip Committee Co-Chair*

Piney Grove Field Trip May 31, 2014

Registration Required

Limited spaces available

All VSO field trips will have a registration fee of \$20 for NON-members only. See details on page 5.

The VSO and the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) are again offering a field trip to The Nature Conservancy's Piney Grove Preserve, site of nesting Red-Cockaded Woodpeckers. Mike Wilson from the CCB will be the trip leader and educator. Access to this protected site is through his support and the cooperation of The Nature Conservancy. Participants in past years have been able to see red-cockaded nest sites and had good views of adult birds.

Trip participants will need to assemble at 5:15 AM at the Virginia Diner in Wakefield for a prompt 5:20 departure in carpools. Because of the sensitive nature of the area, the number of participants is limited to 15 people. Participants must be VSO members and be pre-registered.

To register contact Lee Adams, VSO Field Trip Co-chair, at leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com or 540 850-0777.

**Registration
Required**

**VSO Summer Field Trip
Front Royal, Virginia
June 6–8, 2014**

**Special room
rate available – reserve
by June 1st**

Please Note... all VSO field trips have a registration fee of \$20 for non-members only. This fee will be applied to an individual membership that will be active until the end of 2014. If two or more people from the same family register, the registration fee is \$25, which covers a family membership. Groups of students accompanied by their instructor are exempt from this fee. Non-members can join in advance at <http://virginiabirds.net/VSO-Store.html> or pay the registration fee on the first evening of the event.

The VSO summer field trip will visit some of the best birding areas around Front Royal in the Shenandoah Valley. The varied topography and the river valley offer a wide variety of habitats and bird species. Field trips will be offered Friday afternoon, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning. All locations include hiking trails as well as areas that do not require a lot of walking, for those who may have physical limitations. State Park fees apply for the two State Parks visited. Restroom facilities are available in all locations.

HEADQUARTERS

The Quality Inn at 10 Commerce Avenue in Front Royal will be the host hotel. The special VSO room rate is \$63 plus tax per night for one or two persons (\$10 for each additional person). Rooms with two double beds or one king bed are available, and there are microwaves and refrigerators in all rooms. Room reservations must be made by June 1 to get the VSO rate. To make a reservation call 540 635-3161 and ask for the VSO rate.

MEALS

A complimentary hot breakfast buffet served from 6:00 AM is included for those staying at the Quality Inn. Lunch and dinner are on your own. The Quality Inn is in walking distance of downtown and several restaurants. For Saturday's all-day field trip, participants will need to bring lunch.

FRIDAY

1:30 PM

For those arriving on Friday, a trip is planned to visit Shenandoah River (Raymond R. "Andy" Guest, Jr.) State Park. Meet in the hotel lobby, to organize carpools for the 20 minute drive and an afternoon of birding at a beautiful setting along the Shenandoah River. Nesting species include both orioles, Warbling Vireo, Scarlet Tanager, Prothonotary Warbler, and Yellow Warbler. Six to seven species of woodpeckers are also possible. State Park fees apply.

8:00 PM

Gather in the meeting room near the lobby to get a preview of the week-end and socialize with the other participants.

SATURDAY

7:15 AM

Meet outside, in front of the hotel lobby, to organize carpools for an all-day field trip to Sky Meadows State Park, a favorite of local birders (a 35-minute drive). This park includes a wonderful variety of terrain and habitat. Red-headed Woodpecker is common around the Visitor's Center. Those who want to walk to the higher elevations, can look for several species of breeding warblers, including Cerulean, Hooded, Kentucky and American Redstart. Also possible are Ruffed Grouse and Broad-winged Hawk and in the open and wooded areas of the lower elevations, Willow Flycatcher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Yellow Warbler and American Kestrel. Other species typically found in the park are Field Sparrow, Indigo Bunting, and Eastern-wood Pewee. Participants will need to bring lunch, snacks, and beverages to eat in the picnic area of the park.

6:30 PM

A species tally will be held in the meeting room near the lobby.

SUNDAY

7:30 AM

Meet in the hotel lobby for a morning field trip to Blandy Experimental Farm and State Arboretum of Virginia (a 25-minute drive). The habitat at Blandy is open meadows with scattered trees, some ponds and a small wetland. As the state arboretum, this location has an amazing collection of trees and plants, in addition to the birds. Target species include Grasshopper Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite, Willow Flycatcher and Cliff Swallow. While the trip will officially conclude around noon, participants may want to bring lunch to enjoy in the picnic grove near the parking area.

TRIP REGISTRATION

To help plan for the number of leaders and groups, please register in advance by providing the names of participants in your party and a contact telephone number and email address to trip coordinator, Meredith Bell, via email at merandlee@gmail.com or by phone 804 824-49.

Virginia Society of Ornithology

2014 Officers and Board of Director Nominees

The Nominating Committee will put forth the following slate of officers and directors for the consideration of the membership at the business session of the 2014 annual meeting to be conducted on April 25 at 7:00 PM at the Springhill Suites Inn Chesapeake Greenbrier, 1446 Crossways Boulevard, Chesapeake, Virginia. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

President: Joe Coleman

Vice President: Jeff Trollinger

Past President: Andrew Dolby

Treasurer: Vacant (nominations needed)

Secretary: Judith Weigand

Editor, The Raven: Wes Brown

Editor, Virginia Birds and the VSO Newsletter: Vacant (nominations needed)

Board of Directors, Class of 2017

Bruce Johnson – Currently completing a replacement position on the board

Michael Lott – Currently completing a replacement position on the board

Laura Neale – Resides in Rockbridge County, VA and has been President of Virginia Wilderness Committee since 2008 and a Master Naturalist since 2008. Helped start the Upper James Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society in 1998 and helped revive the Rockbridge Bird Club in 2011.

Board of Directors, Class of 2015 (replacement)

David Youker- Resides in Yorktown, VA and is currently the President of the Hampton Roads Bird Club. Has been a certified Master Naturalist for 5 years and has over 1500 volunteer hours. Serves on various teams conducting avifauna population and breeding surveys around the Hampton Roads area.

Respectfully submitted

Andrew Dolby, Chair

Nominating Committee: Bruce Johnson, Michael Lott, and Jeff Thornhill

2014 VSO Membership Dues are DUE!

By now every VSO member should have received a request for membership renewal for 2014. (VSO membership runs January - December).

Many thanks to those who have renewed already.

If you have not yet renewed, you can renew either by mail or online. Use the form on the back of this newsletter and send it in with your check to the address at the bottom of the form. OR go to www.virginiabirds.net and use a credit card, debit card, or PayPal account. You can also purchase VSO merchandise this way. Renewing online helps save paper and postage. We hope it will be more convenient as well.

If you are not sure about your membership status, please contact Shirley Devan, Membership Secretary, vsomembership@cox.net or 757 813-1322.

Virginia Society of Ornithology April 24–27, 2014 Annual Meeting Registration Form

This form will accommodate registration for up to two participants, or you may register online at
<http://www.virginiabirds.net>

Name 1: _____

Name 2: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Primary Phone: _____

Secondary phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Registration Fee: Number (1 or 2) ___ X \$40.00= _____

Make your check payable to:

Sat Eve Banquet Number (1 or 2) ___ X \$35.00= _____

Virginia Society of Ornithology

Mail completed form and check to: Mike Lott, 1701

Total Amount Enclosed: _____

Greenway Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

***Your registration form must be received by April 17, 2014 to guarantee registration for catered meals.**

Participants are responsible for their own lodging. **A limited number of conference hotel rooms are available at a special rate until March 24 at the Springhill Suites Chesapeake (800 228-9290) and Aloft (866 716-8143).**

To speak with a Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival representative or to register for specific Birding Festival field trips, workshops, and other activities, please call: 757 986-3705.

For general meeting inquiries please contact: Andrew Dolby, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Mary Washington, 1301 College Avenue, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. Phone: 540 654-1420. Email: adolby@umw.edu

Annual Meeting Continued from Page 1

Registration

To register for the VSO annual meeting and banquet complete and mail the above form along with your check or visit the VSO Website at www.virginiabirds.net to register and pay electronically. The registration fee is \$40 per person. Banquet tickets are \$35 per person. Banquet reservations must be received by April 17.

Information about the Great Dismal Swamp Birding Festival can be found at www.visitchesapeake.com/gds-birding-festival. Festival events, including field trips, will require pre-registration, which can be done by calling the refuge at 757 986-3705 after March 1.

For all general inquiries about the Annual Meeting, contact Andrew Dolby, VSO Past President: Email: adolby@umw.edu Phone: 540-654-1420.

Tentative Schedule of Events

Thursday, April 24

7:00AM – 9:30PM Birding Festival events, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Friday, April 25

7:00AM – 4:30PM Birding Festival events, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

3:00 – 9:00PM VSO Annual Meeting registration; exhibits and vendors, Springhill Suites

6:00 – 7:00PM Meeting social with heavy hors d'oeuvres and cash bar, Springhill Suites

7:00PM VSO Business meeting; Presentation on the wildlife of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge by refuge staff.

Saturday, April 26

7:00AM – 3:30PM Birding Festival Events, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

1:00PM – 6:00PM Meeting registration open, Springhill Suites

1:00PM – 9:00PM Exhibits and Vendors, Springhill Suites

2:00PM – 4:00PM Scientific Paper Session, Springhill Suites

6:00 – 7:00PM: Reception with light hors d'oeuvres and cash bar

7:00PM: Banquet

Sunday, April 27

7:00AM: Field trips to Piney Grove Preserve and other to-be-announced Chesapeake area destinations - depart from Springhill Suites

12:00PM: Springhill Suites and Aloft guests check out and meeting closes.

For all general meeting inquiries, please call Andrew Dolby at 540 654-1420 or email adolby@umw.edu.

VSO Officers
 President: Joe Coleman, Round Hill
 Past President: Andrew Dolby, Fredericksburg
 Vice President: Jeff Trollinger, Gum Spring
 Secretary: Judith Wiegand, Stanton
 Treasurer: Sue Thrasher, Lynchburg
 Raven Editor, Wes Brown, Parksley
 Newsletter Editors: Linda Fields & Alan Schreck, Arlington
 Membership Secretary, Shirley Devan, Williamsburg

VSO Board of Directors
Terms Expire 2014
 Mike Lott, Fredericksburg
 Bruce Johnson, Lovettsville
 Jerry Thornhill, Elk Garden
Terms Expire 2015
 Joelle Buffa, Greenbackville
 Keith Carson, Blue Grass
 Russell Taylor, Vienna
Terms Expire 2016
 Bill Williams, Williamsburg
 Lenny Bankester, Alexandria
 Daniel Bieker, North Garden

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Ornithology
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2013 VSO Membership Renewal:

Name & Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

____ Please check here if you wish to receive your newsletter electronically. Print your email address clearly. Note that we do not share members' email addresses with any other organization. We may contact you by email to notify you of upcoming events, field trips, conferences, and organization news. You may opt out of these email notices at any time.

____ Contributing Membership \$60
 ____ Sustaining Membership \$35
 ____ Family Membership \$25
 ____ Active Membership \$20
 ____ Life Membership (Individual) \$500

I would like to make an additional donation to:
 \$ _____ VSO Conservation fund
 \$ _____ Other

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
 ____ VSO Cloisonne Pin \$5.00

Please return this form with your check, payable to the VSO, to:
 VSO
 PO Box 5994
 Williamsburg, VA 23188-5994

You may also join, renew, and purchase items online at www.virginiabirds.net.

As always, your support means so much to the success of the VSO. Thank you!!