



VSO Newsletter

A Publication of the Virginia Society of Ornithology

Website: www.virginiabirds.net **eBird:** ebird.org/content/va/ **Facebook:** [Virginia Society of Ornithology](https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaSocietyofOrnithology)

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

Virginia Beach Trip December 5–7, 2014

by Lee Adams

The VSO annual field trip to Virginia Beach will be held Friday, December fifth through Sunday, December seventh, 2014. Friday afternoon will be a driving trip through the Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge, which will also be open on Saturday 12/6 and Sunday 12/7 for Open Roads Days. Some may wish to explore

Pleasure House Point on their own. Other field trips include a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) on Saturday morning, and a tram ride at Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park on Sunday morning. For additions to the schedule & updates, please check:

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

LODGING:

There will be blocks of rooms available at three oceanfront Choice Hotels with a variety of accommodations to suit everyone. Renovations have been completed at (VA563). To register for the group rate you must mention the Virginia Society of Ornithology.

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SAVE THE DATES:

May 8-10 2015

The 2015 Annual Meeting will be held at the fantastic Wintergreen Resort in Nelson County. Banquet speaker will be world-famous naturalist and author **Scott Weidensaul**.

Field trips, exhibits, technical presentations – mark your calendar and plan to attend!

Call for Applications —Deadline 30 January 2015

J. J. Murray Research Award

This annual \$1,000 student research grant is one of the ways in which the VSO supports the study of Virginia avifauna.

Criteria and eligibility:

The Murray Award was established 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 award is designed to promote graduate and undergraduate research, and the research must consist of current or projected field studies on Virginia birds.

Proposals will be judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaning contribution to our understanding

of Virginia avifauna. Upon completion of the research, the recipient will be asked to present the results at a VSO annual meeting, and are encouraged to publish the results in an appropriate journal. The recipient will also be awarded a one-year membership in the VSO.

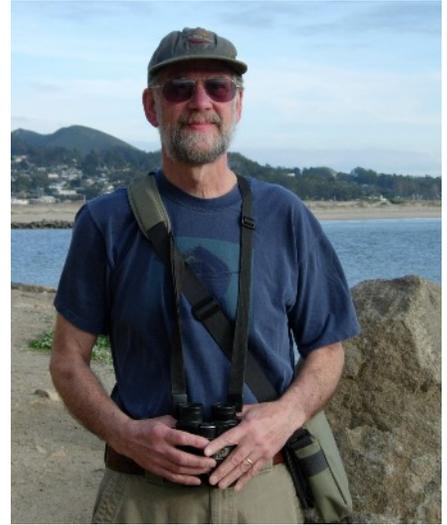
Application procedures:

Proposals should be of a reasonable length. If the proposal is longer than 15 pages it must include a summary of no more than two pages. Submissions will be evaluated by the VSO and must be received by 30 January 2015.

If the research is part of a degree program, students should include the name of the institution and department they are enrolled in, the

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Presidents Message:



As I write this column in mid-August we're enjoying another of this summer's wonderfully cool days and I've just seen my first Loudoun County Mississippi Kite. Many of us can remember when one had to travel to southern Virginia to enjoy seeing this beautiful raptor. A few years ago that changed when Mississippi Kites were documented nesting in Prince William and Fairfax County. While still not common in most of the state, this species is no longer reviewable in either the Piedmont or the Coastal Plain.

The mission of the Virginia Society of Ornithology is the study, conservation, and enjoyment of Virginia's birds and we've been involved in documenting and enjoying this species in Virginia for years. The 1987, or third edition, of *Virginia's Birdlife; An Annotated Checklist* listed only eight records for this bird, none of which were for breeding. The 2007 edition of *Virginia's Birdlife* lists numerous records of the species, a number of which are for breeding. Tools for reporting bird sightings have exploded since the third edition of *Virginia's Birdlife* and as birding has become ever more popular, those tools are almost overwhelming today. Most birders only report their sightings to one or two sources so following what is happening is, at best, difficult, and for some, almost impossible. About ten years ago Alan Schreck and Linda Fields proposed, and the Board agreed, that VSO begin publishing *Virginia Birds*, a quarterly publication for the purpose of providing "a concise, readable summary of the important avian events and trends in Virginia." Little did they realize how important this summary would become to those studying birds in Virginia. Because the different regional editors collect and summarize information on birding from a number of sources *Virginia Birds* is an excellent guide to what is happening with birds in Virginia in the recent past. Organized by region it includes early and late sightings of species, unusually large numbers of a particular species, and rare species. Ideally the reports show "trends and patterns of occurrence that provide insights about the status of birds" in Virginia and specifically in a region.

Virginia Birds, at its best, pulls together information from a number of sources, including individuals, and as a result is an excellent summary of important avian events and trends in Virginia bird life. It is not a real time guide to finding birds. The VSO Board of Directors at its August meeting reaffirmed the importance of *Virginia Birds* and decided that it should continue as long as we can find a general editor and have regional editors for every region in the state. While we also decided to keep a print issue, we also decided to offer, simultaneously, with the printing of the hard copy, an online color issue.

If you are interested in helping with *Virginia Birds* in any way please let me know. It is complex and challenging to pull together so help is frequently needed with one or more aspects of the publication.

Joe Coleman
 President, Virginia Society of Ornithology

<p>Editor: Len Alfredson 1300 Crystal Drive #509 Arlington, VA 22202 vseditor@verizon.net</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>2014-15 Submission Schedule Issue Copy Due Winter 2014 Oct 24 Spring 2015 Jan 23 Summer 2015 May 22</p>
<p>Change of Address and requests for electronic delivery: Virginia Society of Ornithology PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188 vsomembership@cox.net</p>	<p>Submissions may be edited for style or length.</p>	<p>Bird reports in this newsletter may not have been approved by VARCOM (The Virginia Avian Records Committee).</p>

Conservation Corner

I asked Mary Elfner to write a summary of the Team Wood Thrush Project that was initiated back in 2011. The VSO awarded a Conservation Grant to this effort. - Patti Reum



TEAM WOOD THRUSH - Summary Report Spring

In 2011, while working for the National Audubon Society as the Virginia Important Bird Areas coordinator, I received a TogetherGreen fellowship (www.Togethergreen.org/fellows/fellow/mary-elfner) in support of a vision of forming a team of young conservationists, and their families and teachers, called Team Wood Thrush. The fellowship contained \$10,000 to start the program.

Now in Year Three, Team Wood Thrush is a conservation education and action program that educates middle and high school students throughout Virginia. The need being addressed is to raise awareness and engage a targeted population of students, teachers and families in conservation, using the Wood Thrush, a rapidly declining species, as the focal point or indicator species. The evidence of this need is the declining numbers of Wood Thrush due to habitat fragmentation and loss.

The Wood Thrush is a beloved bird species – the official bird of the District of Columbia. Its attractive appearance, beautiful song – considered by many the finest in North America – and long migration make it a charismatic focal point for educational efforts to

promote forest conservation in communities that must make longer-term decisions about land use. This program, Team Wood Thrush, educates and connects students in Virginia, with in-school activities, field work, and an online social networking site, so that the students can communicate in person and online about forest bird species, such as the Wood Thrush, and their conservation. Actual conservation work consists of removing invasive species, such as Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) and Multiflora rose, and planting native species, such as blueberries and dogwoods, that are known to benefit Wood Thrush and their habitat.

This program is needed as students require guidance in an increasingly urban and technological world to appreciate nature, being outdoors, and the importance of protecting natural areas around their communities. The Wood Thrush is a powerful emblem of the loss of habitat on which both people and wildlife depend. We hope to connect our partners with expansion into Central America, where Wood Thrush winter, in future years.

As of Spring 2014, Team Wood Thrush has partnered with four schools to educate approximately 500 students, teachers and family members over three years. We have conducted nine lectures and seven field trips, including a Conservation Action Day in Forest Hill Park in May of 2013 to plant native species such as dogwoods, blueberries and viburnums that produce berries in the summer to provide fuel for migrating Wood Thrush.

Funding partners, including the Dominion Foundation, the Robins Foundation, and the Virginia Society of Ornithology, along with several private individuals, have helped augment the original TogetherGreen Fellowship of \$10,000 with an additional \$20,000.

We envision having the capacity to continue growing throughout Virginia and eventually into Central America to work with students and their communities in the winter habitat of Wood Thrush.



Photo by Larry Meade

James Eike Service Award

In 1983, the Virginia Society of Ornithology Board of Directors approved the James Eike Service Award, named in honor of James Eike, a member of the Virginia Society of Ornithology from 1933 until his death in 1983.

Eike's long and faithful service, his dedication, and his enthusiasm in promoting the work of the VSO gave him a unique status in the organization. The recipient is recognized by the presentation of a silver Raven pin. The first pin was given to Claire Eike, in honor of her late husband for whom the award was named.

The James Eike Service Award is given to recognize a VSO member for outstanding service to the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Eligibility for consideration would include service as an officer, board member,

foray director, field trip leader, or other contributions to the organization. A list of previous Eike Award recipients may be found at <http://www.Virginiabirds.net/Eike.html>.

The Eike Service Award Committee is soliciting nominations for the award. Nominators should send a letter of nomination giving the rationale behind the nomination. In addition, two letters of support are required.

These materials should be sent to Robert Ake ake@cox.net by February 1, 2015. The committee will review all nomination packets and make its recommendation to the VSO Board in the spring with the award itself being presented at the 2015 VSO Annual Meeting.

- Robert Ake

Jackson M. Abbott Conservation

In 1973 the Virginia Society of Ornithology established a conservation award to be given to individuals or organizations that have demonstrated outstanding conservation work in the state of Virginia.

The award, a framed certificate acknowledging the accomplishments of the recipient, is presented at the annual meeting. In 1989, the award was

renamed in honor of Jackson M. Abbott for his lifelong devotion to conservation and his effective work on its behalf.

Please send the name of any potential nominee to Patti Reum, Conservation Committee Chair at pareum@gmail.com. Deadline is January 16, 2015.

- Patti Reum

J. J. Murray Research Award

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degree they are working towards, and the name of their academic or research advisor. Each proposal should include a letter from the student's academic advisor verifying that the applicant is a student in good standing, and that he/she is receiving the advisor's support for this project. Both proposals and letters of reference should be submitted electronically as Word documents or PDFs, although they can be submitted separately. Applicants will be notified of the results by 10 April 2015.

Please send proposals or requests for information to:

Gene Sattler
gsattler@gmail.com
Department of Biology & Chemistry
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd.
Lynchburg, VA 24502

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

Roger Jones, Sperryville, VA
Ann Dunn, Charlottesville, VA

Kerri Falivene, Stafford, VA
Kim Cook, Powhatan, VA

Sarah Gustafson, Vienna VA
Victor Klein, Parksley, VA

2014 Foray Report

This year's Foray took place in Middlesex and King & Queen Counties, from June 7 to June 15. These counties border the ecologically precious Dragon Run, a pristine swamp in the middle peninsula of Virginia. Middlesex is bordered on the north by the Rappahannock River, and on the south by the Dragon River and the Piankatank River into which it flows.

King & Queen County is bordered on the south by the Mattaponi River, and a bit of the York River into which it flows. We took advantage of all this water access, covering 56.5 miles of river by boat or kayak. The Dragon itself was too dry to navigate this time of year, but we were able to access it by land in several places, mostly thanks to the Friends of Dragon Run. This organization kindly provided us with guides so we could access their private properties.

Many other landowners also provided access, largely in King & Queen County. Another area we took advantage of was Dragon Run State Park; three forayers hiked the numerous lumber roads and trails there. A

total of 395 miles was surveyed. Forty-one forayers in 20 groups achieved fairly complete coverage of the two counties. More detail can be found at

<https://sites.google.com/a/umich.edu/2014-vso-foray/>.

They submitted 152 checklists to eBird, which are available under the username VSOforay2014. A total of 106 species and 11,149 individual birds were reported. We obtained probable or confirmed evidence of breeding for 67 of these species.

Several species were seen only once: yellow-crowned night-heron, eastern screech-owl, bank swallow, black-throated green warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, Kentucky warbler, Baltimore oriole, and dickcissel.

There were a number of differences in species abundance between the two counties; reasons for those differences will be explored in the report which will be submitted to the Raven.

- Susan Brown

FROM LOCAL CHAPTERS:

Richmond Audubon Society (RAS) does it again! Congratulations to these gentlemen!

Jerry Ulman's "Flyways and Byways" contains an excellent article about avian face recognition. RAS President Lewis Barnett is interviewed about his research into facial recognition of Downy Woodpeckers. Nicholas Tayler, a rising junior, is assisting him. Below is the article.

http://www.timesdispatch.com/entertainment-life/home-garden/flyways-and-byways-digital-face-recognition-may-extend-to-birds/article_5ad114cb-f58f-5c03-9c1f-a62610569ec8.html

Another member, Adolph White, was in "Style Weekly" this week. Adolph is seen as the "Martin Man" for all the long term continuous work he has been doing with the Purple Martins.

<http://www.styleweekly.com/richmond/the-martin-man/Content?oid=2101708>

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

Your membership in the VSO runs from January to December each calendar year. Later in the fall we will remind you to pay your membership for 2015. Of course you may renew NOW for 2015 using the membership form on the back of this newsletter. Or you can renew easily and securely online with your debit or credit card: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO-Store.html>

REMINDER: The Virginia Society of Ornithology is a 501(c)(3) organization and therefore all contributions (including membership dues, donations, bequests, legacies, devices, transfers) are tax deductible.

Front Royal Trip Report - June 6-8, 2014

What a fantastic weekend we had at Front Royal June 6-8 for the VSO summer trip! The 40 attendees enjoyed sunny skies every day, and we tallied 91 species over the 3 days.

At Andy Guest/Shenandoah River State Park on Friday afternoon, great birds and lovely scenery made for a PERFECT outing by enthusiastic and knowledgeable participants. A Broad-winged Hawk being harried by a Baltimore Oriole may have been the highlight, or maybe the two Louisiana Waterthrushes walking the path ahead of us, or the three Yellow-throated Vireos in one tree, or the nearly constant singing Warbling Vireos.

We also watched several species fly back and forth with food for hungry nestlings: Orchard Oriole, Baltimore

Oriole, Yellow Warbler and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

Sky Meadows State Park was the site of Saturday's trip. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Yellow-breasted Chats, Savannah Sparrow and much more were seen on an enchanting walk through woodlands & meadows. Lee Adams led a group later in the afternoon to Skyline Drive, where they stopped at a few overlooks and pull-offs. They found Cerulean Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Hooded Warbler, and calling Wood Thrush and Veery. Meredith and Lee Bell took a small group back to Andy Guest, where they watched another (or maybe the same) Broad-winged

Hawk get harassed, this time by a band of six Tree Sparrows.

We spent Sunday morning at Blandly Experimental Farm/State Arboretum of Virginia, which boasts a spectacular collection of trees and plants along with a variety of birds. A Green Heron perched on a dead tree for several minutes, giving the photographers in the group ample time to get shots from all angles. A cooperative Willow Flycatcher posed atop a bush and sang unceasingly, making it easy to identify. Raptors included Merlin, American Kestrel and Cooper's Hawk.

*Meredith Bell and Lee Adams
VSO Field Trip Co-Chairs*



Pictures from the Front Royal trip

Photos by Lee Adams

VSO Piney Grove

Fifteen of us met at the Virginia Diner parking lot. At 5:45 a.m. we were waiting at the nest trees for the Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*) to start their day. Mike Wilson, Biologist for The Center for Conservation Biology, knows each of these birds like neighbors in a community. This one with colored bands on his legs is the dominant male of this cluster; that one is a female helper. It is a fascinating story of bringing these birds back to a viable population in Virginia, though Mike says that a hurricane or other massive storm could wipe out this habitat, AND these birds.

We visited several clusters of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, and ended up seeing 13 birds. It was fascinating to watch the adults bring food to the nest holes. We learned that wood roaches are a common food item for the nestlings. These nestlings were approximately 18 days old and had already been banded. Mike regaled us with stories about stacking ladders and fearless climbing bird banders.

I prompted Mike him to talk about these woodpeckers, and about Bachman's Sparrows which use a very similar habitat, though are currently extirpated from Virginia, about Black Rails, and about the Nightjar Survey. Several people

were interested in adopting a Nightjar Survey route. Everyone wanted to hear more about Black Rails which are declining at a frightening rate. We talked about ticks and chiggers, antibiotics and genetic markers in relation to Lyme disease, conservation of habitat & proper prescribed burning. While we waited for an adult Red-cockaded Woodpecker to bring food to the nestlings, Summer Tanagers, Yellow-breasted Chats and Bob Whites caught our ears, and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Flickers and Common Yellowthroats held our eyes.

- Lee Adams

Virginia Beach Trip *Continued from page 1*

Quality Inn & Suites Oceanfront (VA314)

705 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 428-8935 / FAX (757) 425-2769
\$58 + tax. Reserve by November 14.
http://www.qualityinn.com/hotel-virginia_beach-virginia-VA314

Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563)

2321 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 491-2400/ FAX (757) 491-8204
\$69 + tax. Reserve by November 20.
http://www.comfortsuites.com/hotel-virginia_beach-virginia-VA563

Comfort Inn and Suites Oceanfront (VA440)

2015 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451
(757) 425-8200/ FAX (757) 425-6521
\$79 + tax. Reserve by November 04.
http://www.comfortinn.com/hotel-virginia_beach-virginia-VA440

FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Meet at the Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center at 316 Marsh Causeway Knotts Island, NC at 1:00 p.m. Please bring FRS radios if you have them so that cars can stay in touch. After a quick look at the displays at the visitor center, where a bathroom is available, we will drive the roads of the refuge. On the way back to Virginia Beach we will stop at the Charles Kurault Trail observation platform on NC 615 to view Snow Geese and Tundra Swans coming in to roost for the evening.

If you wish to explore on your own, the address for Pleasure House Point Natural Area is 3957 Marlin Bay Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23455. Directions from hotel area would be: north on Atlantic Ave which becomes Shore Dr, continue about six miles on Shore Dr and cross Lesner Bridge. After you cross the bridge go about

3/4 mile and turn left onto Marlin Bay Dr, park along the street and explore the trails on your own.

FRIDAY EVENING

Eat dinner together at 7:00 p.m. at Dockside Seafood and Fishing Center 3311 Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 TEL: 757-481-4545. Email Lee Adams by November 30 if you are joining the group for dinner. Their website is <http://www.docksideva.com/order/eze/Default.aspx>

SATURDAY MORNING

The Saturday field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) will leave promptly at 8:00 a.m. from the parking lot of the CBBT visitor center. Participants must meet & check in at the CBBT office at 7:15 a.m. This is a half day trip. Participants should bring binoculars, spotting scopes, snacks, and beverages and be prepared for winter weather. Participation will be limited to the first 45 to sign up since there is a requirement to pay a security guard to accompany each group of 15. The fee is \$10 per person for the cost of the security guard; please bring cash so that the fee can be paid to CBBT Saturday morning. The security information form, available at: <http://www.cbbt.com/forms/2011RevisedRESEARCHERBirdingApp.pdf>

is needed by Nov 15 for each person who registers for the trip. Please fill out page 2 which is headed: "Each individual in this Group must provide the following information" and fax (540-834-0767) or mail to me, Lee Adams Box 1671 Fredericksburg, VA 22402. I will fill out the group information it

asks for. I must take the forms to the CBBT office 10 days prior to the trip.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Some folks may want to continue north from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to eat lunch, explore and bird. Sting-Ray's Restaurant, 26507 Lankford Hwy, Cape Charles, VA 23310 is a good place for lunch. The Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, 26507 Lankford Hwy, Cape Charles, VA 23310 and Kiptopeke State Park, 3540 Kiptopeke Dr, Cape Charles, VA 23310 are two great birding places.

SUNDAY MORNING

Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park 4005 Sandpiper Rd, Virginia Beach, VA 23456

The tram trip at BBNWR will begin at 8:00 AM. This will be a half day trip. Participants should bring spotting scopes, lunch, snacks, and beverages and more warm clothes than you think you will need. After a leisurely tram ride with stops to view a myriad of shorebirds and waterfowl, some time will be spent birding and lunching at False Cape State Park. This trip is limited to the first 24 to register. Please bring \$10 checks made out to VSO.

TRIP REGISTRATION

It is important to register for the field trips as participation is limited. Register with the trip coordinator, Lee Adams, by email by November 15. Please put VSO VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP in the subject line of the email, and include your name, e-mail address & cell phone number, and the field trips you are requesting.

2015 VSO Membership Renewal

Name & Address: _____

Email 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 \$20
- Active Membership \$20
- Life Membership \$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, please consider renewing at the "Sustaining" level" or the "Contributing" level - or becoming a Life Member!

VSO Sales Items

- _____ Virginia's Birdlife "Gold Book" Rotterborn-Brinkley 2007 \$20
- _____ VSO Arm Patch \$4
- _____ VSO Cloisonne Pin \$5

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

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