Have you signed up yet for a glorious weekend of birding in the beautiful mountains and valleys of Roanoke with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club? The deadline to register is April 19, and more details can be found in your winter VSO newsletter, as well as on the VSO and the host club’s websites at www.virginiabirds.net and www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com. Register at the VSO website or by mailing a check with the registration form found in this newsletter. As you fill out your registration form you can also purchase a chance to bird with Pete Dunne on Saturday morning. Prices per person are: registration $40, banquet $36, and raffle $10.

The Sheraton Roanoke is headquarters for the meeting. April 8 is the deadline to reserve a room at the special rate of $99 plus tax; this rate will also be honored for three days prior to and after the meeting. Call 800-563-3535 or 540-563-9300 and identify yourself as part of the Virginia Society of Ornithology 2016 Annual Meeting, or reserve online at https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/events/start.action?id=1510291635&key=1EEF0375.

When you pick up your registration packet, you may sign up for a boxed lunch to take on your field trips Saturday and/or Sunday. Lunches will include sandwich, chips, cookie and beverage for $13 each. Otherwise lunch is on your own at the Sheraton’s award-winning Shula’s 347 Grill or at another of the fine restaurants Roanoke has to offer. Field trip leaders may have suggestions for restaurants in the vicinity of your trip. The hotel also offers complimentary shuttle rides to Valley View Mall for its guests, where you will find a wide variety of places to eat. For breakfast at the hotel you may purchase a hot breakfast buffet or menu item at Pi Kitchen, or lighter fare at the Market, both opening at 6 a.m.

We will start the weekend with several field trips Friday afternoon (preregistration required at 540-580-5214 or rvbc2015@outlook.com), followed by a social hour, a short business meeting and a program about the birds of the area presented by Jerry Via. Saturday and Sunday mornings we will offer a plethora of field trips, which you will sign up for Friday afternoon and evening as you check in at the registration table. On Saturday, visit the paper session to learn about recent research in the field of ornithology, followed by a social hour and the weekend’s highlight, a banquet featuring acclaimed author and speaker Pete Dunne.

On Friday and Saturday, be sure to look for our silent auction with many wonderful bird and outdoors-oriented items, as well as some exciting gifts and discount coupons for restaurants. If you’re suffering from “warbler neck” after all the great birding Saturday morning, try a relaxing massage; we suggest a donation of $1/minute to the trained massage therapist.

- Alyce Quinn

UPCOMING EVENTS & TRIPS - SAVE THE DATES

Annual Meeting, April 29-May 1, 2016 - Hosted by the Roanoke Valley Bird Club at the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center. Keynote speaker will be Pete Dunne.

Highland County - June 10-12 Details on page 8

Chincoteague Field Trip, September 16 - 18, 2016
President’s Message:

The Pine Siskins and Dark-eyed Juncos appeared at the feeder this past week to apparently bring tidings of great storms to come! As I write this, predictions are that Central Virginia will be buried in somewhere around 2 feet of snow. Quite frankly, I look forward to the peace and quiet. It seems like when you can get out and about there is always something to do. This gives me the perfect opportunity to slow down and just enjoy the view. Oh, and go through about 20 lbs of black oil sunflower and 6 suet blocks in 48 hours or less!!

As the storm approaches, it serves as a reminder that through all the bumps and storms, life goes on. Each season brings a few big surprises, but the seasons pass none-the-less and another year passes. As we begin 2016, we are starting a very big project for the VSO, the Breeding Bird Atlas II (BBA II). Beginning this year, but running for the next four years, we (meaning EVERYONE in VSO) will be surveying the birds in every nook and cranny of Virginia. We will need your help….all of you! The first Atlas was conducted from 1985-1989. It has been 30 years and much has changed in Virginia in that time. For one, there is less grassland and more forest, and less habitat overall with more concrete and asphalt! We have experienced the ten warmest years on record globally since 1998 (eleven as of today, 2015 shattered the old record!) In Virginia, these changes have already resulted in changing migration dates and rising sea levels. It is likely we will find many changes in our bird communities with the BBA II.

I would also invite you to the Annual Meeting in Roanoke the last weekend in April. This will be a great opportunity to meet fellow birders from around the state, hear a great speaker and learn more about the BBA II. I always enjoy seeing old friends at the annual meeting and making new ones. While it is hard to fathom, I have been attending these meetings for nearly 20 years now. (Talk about some changes…pants and gray hair come to mind!)

I hope you will join the effort, either in time, or in donating to the BBA II. Bird conservation is not a spectator sport and it is how change happens, but change for the better!!

- Jeff Trollinger - President, VSO

VENDOR OPPORTUNITIES at the ANNUAL MEETING

Limited exhibit and vendor space is available. Prices are $10/individual, $20/business, and nonprofits are free. Limited advertising space is available in the program. Rates are $90/full page, $60/half page, $45/quarter page and $25/business card size.

Exhibit/vendor space (deadline March 15): Robin Austin, 540-929-5222, rvbcrobin@yahoo.com

Advertising space (deadline March 30): Carol Siler, cesiler@yahoo.com, 540-725-1609

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vsomembership@cox.net

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.

2016 Submission Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Copy Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td>May 20, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
<td>Aug 12, 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
<td>Jan 27, 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Communication is a part of life. Asking your spouse to pick up a dozen eggs at the grocery store. Checking the football score while running errands. The proverbial list continues indefinitely. Communication is part of being human. Like the rest of society the way we in the birding community communicate is not static, but constantly evolving.

That said, we are sometimes slow to fully embrace all the technologies and opportunities that are made available. This column will explore the advances in communication the Virginia birding community has made in the past year and the opportunities in the future for more effective interaction between the members of our community.

Birding listservs and email have been around for over a decade and are very straightforward in how they work and, while they will certainly be part of the future for a time to come, they are, relatively speaking, static. Although eBird is similar in its longevity it has a constantly evolving set of tools to learn about the birds around us. Without spending too much time describing these various features, I will say that the rare bird and the needs alerts provide real time updates on birds in any geographic region (such as the state of Va or your county) similar to those found on a listserv. Facebook has proven to be a powerful tool to all birders whether their interest lies in seeing beautiful pictures of backyard birds or learning about the most recent rare birds being found in Virginia.

There are two Facebook groups to be aware of. The first is “Birding Virginia” which features anything and everything to do with the birds of our diverse and wonderful state from backyard bird feeders to Chincoteague to Skyline Drive. The second is “VA Notable Bird Sightings & Discussion Group” which pretty well describes its mission in its title.

Near identical in purpose to this second group is a Groupme texting platform meant to provide the most up-to-date information on rare bird sightings. Rest assured, however, that rare bird sightings do make their way to the listserv in a timely fashion provided they are made known via one of these media above.

While keeping in mind the variety of digital communication venues it is important to keep in mind the importance of face-to-face interpersonal relationships. As birders we are notoriously poor at introducing ourselves. Whether you are on a regular bird walk with new faces, or at the site of a rare bird, the Virginia birding community can only be brighter if you take the effort to introduce yourself.

- Nick Newberry

ANNUAL MEETING: Tentative Schedule of Events:

**Friday, April 29**
1:00 – 2:00 p.m. Pre-registered field trips depart
1:00 – 9:00 p.m. Registration and field trip sign-up
3:00 – 9:00 p.m. Exhibits, vendors, and silent auction
5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Social hour with hors d’oeuvres and cash bar
7:00 p.m. Business meeting and “Birds of the Roanoke Valley” by Jerry Via

**Saturday, April 30**
7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Field trips
1:00 – 4:00 p.m. Massages by Traveling Therapy
1:00 – 6:00 p.m. Registration, field trip sign-up, and silent auction
1:00 – 7:00 p.m. Exhibits and vendors
2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Scientific papers
5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Social hour with light hors d’oeuvres and cash bar
7:00 p.m. Banquet and “Large-headed Flycatcher” by Pete Dunne

**Sunday, May 1**
7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Field trips

Annual Meeting Inquiries

General Questions: Alyce Quinn
twoquinns@yahoo.com or 540-719-0109

Field Trips: Linda Cory,
RVBC2015@outlook.com or 540-580-5214

Registrations: Norris Ford,
dnford@yahoo.com or 540-344-9991
VSO 2016 Annual Meeting Field Trips

Field trip leaders will have water and snacks, first aid kits and other necessities on hand. Field trips will each have a maximum number of participants and are on a first-come, first-served basis. Although not likely, some of the field trips may change due to availability of the trip sites or other field conditions. Carpooling is recommended for all field trips, and sturdy/waterproof shoes are recommended for most. Below are descriptions of all the trips, along with travel time and distance to each site.

Friday Afternoon: (Pre-registration Required)

Greenfield Birds and Butterflies – (25 minutes/15 miles)

Greenfield is a popular place to bird due to a diverse habitat and convenient location. It is on Route 220 in Botetourt County near I-81 and the Appalachian Trail. Greenfield consists of 110 acres and includes flat graveled pathways around Greenfield Lake, grassy fields where a variety of hawks hunt and a marshy area below the dam. We will likely encounter wood duck, American coot, willow flycatcher, eastern kingbird, eastern wood-peewee, warbling vireo, red-winged blackbird and orchard and Baltimore orioles, to name a few. While looking for interesting birds, this walk will also concentrate on spotting butterflies in the warm (hopefully) afternoon sun. Walking will be mostly flat, but will also include a gradual uphill walk for those who wish to continue up to the grassy field above the lake. Benches are located on the flat path.

Harvey’s Knob Hawk Watch – (45 minutes/40 miles)

Harvey’s Knob has been the primary hawk watching post for the Roanoke Valley and the Lynchburg Bird Clubs since 1977 when it was established by VSO lifetime member, Miriam Moore. Located at mile marker 95.6 on the Blue Ridge Parkway near the Peaks of Otter Lodge, the hawk watching post is ideally located along a ridge at 2,600 feet in elevation, overlooking spectacular valleys. Hawk watchers spend over 500 man hours each season from early September to mid-November to view and record over 10,000 migrant raptors. To see data, visit https://sites.google.com/site/bijame/. Although this will not be the peak season, you will most likely see some movement of the return migration. It is also a chance to see where this important hawk counting is done. Very little walking is expected, and you can bring a folding chair to stay a while.

Mill Mountain and Smith Park – (20 minutes/9 miles)

Mill Mountain is where Roanoke’s famous star can be found, giving Roanoke the name of Star City of the South. At 1,750 feet, it catches plentiful migrating warblers such as yellow, palm, pine, black-throated green, northern parula and worm-eating. We will also expect various vireos and thrushes, yellow-billed cuckoo, rose-breasted grosbeak and scarlet tanager. The mile-long hike is around the top of the mountain through a wooded area and the Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden. We will also take time to view the Roanoke River Greenway. Walking is level, but partly through grasses that may be wet. Our target bird will be the yellow-crowned night-heron that nests in the sycamore branches low over the Roanoke River. Because this species is seldom found outside the coastal plain but is found in several locations throughout the valley, the Roanoke Valley Bird Club recently adopted it for our logo.

Radford Arsenal – (50 minutes/40 miles)

Designated as an Important Bird Area, this 2,700 acre property on the New River is managed by the Radford Army Ammunition Plant. Visitation is by permit only. The trip will consist of a riding tour with stops at various points of interest with opportunities for participants to take short walks. Because of the installation's grassland habitat and management practices, it is home to several unique species including brown-headed nuthatch, prairie warbler, and grasshopper and Henslow's sparrows. Due to security and safety concerns, participants will be required to stay within sight of the installation's escort. Participants will be required to show identification prior to gaining access to the installation. Binoculars, spotting scopes and cameras are allowed. Total number of participants is limited and all participants must be U.S. citizens.

Saturday Morning:

Arcadia and Solitude Swamp – (55 minutes/40 miles)

This all-time favorite birding spot sweeps along the James River to the James River Bridge overlook and the grassy fields below. Orchard and Baltimore orioles are frequently seen, along with various
vireos, sparrows and northern rough-winged swallow. River birds can vary, and hawks, including an occasional osprey or bald eagle, have been recorded here. We will also be on the lookout for warblers, including the prairie. We will look for yellow-throated vireo on the way to Solitude swamp, then continue on to look for warblers, vireos, brown thrasher and blue grosbeak. The swamp can produce a variety of ducks and sometimes prothonotary warbler. Walking will be around 1 mile and mostly level on gravel, but possibly wet.

**Bent Mountain and Poor Mountain – (30 minutes/22 miles)**

Bent Mountain is a hamlet just south of Roanoke with great habitat for a variety of birds such as bobolink, found in 2015. The property behind Bent Mountain Community Center is a high-elevation bog with a unique habitat for willow and sometimes alder flycatchers, red-winged blackbird, orchard and Baltimore orioles, Louisiana waterthrush and more. Expect 1-2 miles of level walking, and wear waterproof shoes. We will then caravan up Poor Mountain to 3,850 feet elevation to look for nesting songbirds, including a variety of warblers such as Kentucky, chestnut-sided, redstart, black-throated green and possibly Blackburnian. Ruffed grouse and turkey are also present as well as scarlet tanager, wood thrush and ovenbird.

**Ponds of Botetourt County – (45 minutes/30 miles)**

“Have scope, will travel” is the motto of this walk. Carvins Cove is a reserve protected by the largest variety of conservation easement in Virginia history with over 60 miles of trails and 12,700 acres. The woods produce warblers such as pine and prairie, as well as several species of woodpeckers. The cove is a reliable spot for waterfowl, usually in the colder months, but springtime as well. Bald eagle and osprey occasion the cove. We will then proceed to three or four much smaller but reliable ponds in search of ducks and shorebirds.

**Booker T. Washington National Monument and Smith Mountain Lake Community Park – (40 minutes/25 miles)**

Designated as a national monument, Booker T. Washington Park is located at his birthplace. This historical 207 acre property is endowed with hardwood forests, grassy fields and a large variety of birds, wildflowers and butterflies. Park personnel will take us on a one-mile, mostly flat walk in search of woodland birds including brown-headed nuthatch, blue grosbeak, Acadian flycatcher, grasshopper sparrow, Louisiana waterthrush, a variety of woodpeckers and turkey. We will then carpool to Smith Mountain Lake Community Park to walk the 1 ½-mile loop trail on the wooded peninsula that stretches out into the lake. The trail will take us through pine stands that gradually change to a hardwood forest. In 2015 we enjoyed a pair of nesting red-headed woodpeckers at the park, and brown-headed nuthatches are year-round residents. Shorebirds and waterfowl should also be seen, with the possibility of double-crested cormorant, common loon, horned grebe and osprey.

**Claytor Nature Study Center – (55 minutes/35 miles)**

Located at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Claytor Nature Study Center encompasses freshwater streams, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, rare plants and wildlife. This is a great place to see a variety of spring migrants. We’ll try for purple martin and other swallows, blue-gray gnatcatcher, wood thrush, gray catbird, early warblers (Louisiana waterthrush, black-and-white, common yellowthroat, American redstart, northern parula, palm, yellow-rumped and prairie), indigo bunting, orchard oriole, and hopefully a raptor or two. We’ll walk about two miles of trails, and if there has been recent rain in the area, the trails may be muddy, so wear hiking boots.

**Explore Park – (25 minutes/10 miles)**

Operated by Roanoke County Parks and Recreation, Explore Park has long been a popular hiking and birding spot. Just off the Blue Ridge Parkway at mile marker 115, the 1,100 acre property is situated along the Roanoke River Gorge. Hiking trails are moderately hilly as you descend to the Roanoke River and then back up to the Taubman Visitor Center. Habitat includes forest, river, wetlands and open meadows. We should expect to see turkey, woodpeckers, herons, belted kingfisher, wood duck and possibly bald eagle. Many songbirds nest here, such as eastern wood-pewee, great-crested flycatcher, scarlet tanager and Louisiana waterthrush. We will spend a little time in the visitor center to learn about the history of the park, including Native American lore and a settlement that once existed on the site.
Falls Ridge Preserve – (40 minutes/26 miles)

This unspoiled area is owned and maintained by The Nature Conservancy. It has hiking trails, a waterfall, rare plants and interesting geologic features such as a fault line, sink hole and cave. Research shows that this area was settled by and was an important spot for Native Americans. Walking is easy to moderate and hiking boots are recommended. Birding can vary at this beautiful spot, with hawks, raven, indigo bunting, chestnut-sided warbler, redstart and eastern wood-pewee. This location is also a favorite for the local Blue Ridge Wildflower Society.

Fenwick Mines and Craig Creek – (40 minutes/32 miles)

A favorite of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, this trip covers a wide range of habitats in a relatively small area. These include open fields, a small pond, wetlands, a mountain stream and mixed pine-hardwood trees. The Fenwick Nature Trail is one mile of easy walking. Expect to see and hear a variety of warblers and other woodland birds. Wild turkey and ruffed grouse are often found in the area. Red crossbill, woodcock and olive-sided flycatcher have been seen here. Also featured are a wide variety of wildflowers, interesting butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Spring peepers are abundant as well as other chorusing amphibians.

Greenfield Recreational Area – see Friday

Johnson Farm and Peaks of Otter area – (45 minutes/40 miles)

We will carpool to the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center (not the Lodge), then hike the two-mile Johnson Farm Loop trail. It is hilly, but we will set a slow pace. Good walking shoes will be needed, and part of the trail is through a grassy field which can be wet. A variety of migrants and other woodland species are possible on the trip. Target birds include cerulean, black-throated blue and Blackburnian warblers, scarlet tanager, Acadian flycatcher and rose-breasted grosbeak. Participants may then want to visit the Peaks of Otter Lodge.

Lick Run Greenway – (15 minutes/8 miles)

Roanoke is proud of its ever-growing Greenway trail system used for bicycling and walking. Lick Run Greenway is located centrally in town with open areas, woods and wetlands near the Roanoke River. The four-mile round trip hike is mostly flat with one hill which we will take at a leisurely pace. This walk should produce a good cross section of birds found in the lower elevations of the valley, such as yellow-crowned night-heron, great crested flycatcher, yellow-billed cuckoo, warbling and white-eyed vireo, a variety of warblers, scarlet tanager and possible orioles.

Smith Mt Lake State Park (SMLSP) Boat Trip – (45 minutes/30 miles) - $5 entrance fee per person collected at the park site

This field trip is sponsored by park staff and the “Friends of SMLSP” who maintain a roosting spot for osprey. Osprey are known to mate for life and park staff have confirmed that the same pair have returned more than once. Nestlings may be visible at the time of our visit and a pontoon boat trip is offered to view the nest from the water. You can also view the nest via their webcam available in the visitor center. The boat ride is limited to 20 people, and the ride should last about an hour or maybe longer, depending on what we see. We will then do some mostly flat walking through wooded and grassy trails of the park. Besides osprey and waterfowl, other target birds include brown-headed nuthatch and pine warbler.

Warbler Road – (55 minutes/40 miles)

Aptly named, Warbler Road is part of the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail. The 13-mile gravel road goes from the James River up 2,700 feet in elevation to the Blue Ridge Parkway. Terrain covered is old-growth hardwood forests, hemlock-lined trout streams, open meadows, clearings and pine stands. Our target bird is the cerulean warbler. Many other sought-after warblers are present as well as a plethora of migrating songbirds. Walking is minimal and carpooling will be required due to limited pull-off space.

Sunday Morning:

Arcadia and Solitude – See Saturday

Ferrum Birding – (55 minutes/39 miles)

The Ferrum College campus has over 400 acres of forestland with hiking trails, fields and two ponds. One to two miles of hiking is mostly easy with a couple of short hills, and includes a forested trail, open field and then a walk around the pond on the main campus.
Species to be seen in the forested area are Acadian flycatcher, ovenbird, eastern wood-peewee and other woodland birds. Also seen on the Ferrum campus are orchard and Baltimore orioles, brown thrasher, eastern phoebe, eastern bluebird and northern rough-winged swallow. For those interested, on the way back to Roanoke we can do some more birding along a steeper trail at the Grassy Hill Nature Preserve.

**Finca Aloha – (35 minutes/22 miles)**

This is a walking trip around Tim and Alyce Quinn’s property and the surrounding woods and gravel roads. With a wide variety of habitats surrounding their property, including woodlands, a pond, a creek, scrub and open fields, a typical spring day can yield more than 50 species. A few of the birds we will likely encounter include red-shouldered hawk, great crested flycatcher, white-eyed and yellow-throated vireos, blue-grey gnatcatcher, wood thrush, field and grasshopper sparrows, scarlet tanager, orchard and Baltimore orioles and a variety of warblers such as ovenbird, Louisiana waterthrush, common yellowthroat, hooded, pine, prairie, black-throated green, and yellow-breasted chat. Walking is level to hilly; sturdy shoes and long pants are recommended. If you prefer, you can do some stationary birding on the deck. Keep an eye out for Eurasian collared doves as you pass the Burnt Chimney Elementary School a few miles from their house.

**Greenfield Recreational Area – See Friday**

The walking is mostly flat with moderate elevation change. Sturdy waterproof boots are recommended as it could be muddy.

**Warbler Road - See Saturday**

As with most cities, the STP is one of the best places to bird. Entrance is by special permit and only on Sundays, due to heavy equipment used the rest of the week. Trip participants must all enter at the same time and stay together as a group. This site is one of the best spots for viewing shorebirds in the Roanoke Valley. The property includes impoundments, sludge ponds, mudflats, riparian habitat and woodlands. In spring we can expect to find migrant shorebirds such as least, semi-palmated, spotted, solitary and pectoral sandpipers, Wilson’s snipe and both yellowlegs. Songbirds may also be abundant during spring migration, such as white-eyed vireo, a variety of swallows, and blue grosbeak. Kestrel and red-tailed hawk can be seen, along with occasional fish crow and raven.

**Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2)**

The VSO is again partnering with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VA DGIF) to prepare Virginia’s Second Breeding Bird Atlas.

Click [http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html](http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html) to read more about the upcoming VABBA2 and the recruitment of Regional Coordinators.

The primary objectives of the VABBA2 are to:

- Document the status and distribution of VA's breeding birds during the 2016-2020 breeding seasons
- Assess changes in breeding bird species distribution since the first VA BBA (1985-1989)

How can you help with this timely and significant project?

- Volunteer to be an “atlaser” this spring when Regional Coordinators and County Coordinators issue the call for volunteers in your area.
- Make a tax-deductible contribution to the VSO. The VSO is a 501(3)c non-profit organization.

Here are two ways to contribute:

- You may mail your donation to the Virginia Society of Ornithology, PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188. Make your check payable to the VSO and note that it is for VABBA2.
- You may also use PayPal to donate to VABBA2 at [http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html](http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html) by using the VABBA2 Donate Button at the bottom of the page.

Join with other VSO members to support this worthwhile and significant project.
Join us in the beautiful, scenic mountains of western Virginia (aka “Little Switzerland”) for our summer field trip! Highland County is a hot spot among birders throughout Virginia, and we’re excited about the arrangements we’ve made for you on the weekend of June 10-12. Field trips will be offered Friday afternoon, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning. Trip coordinator is Meredith Bell (804-824-4958 or merandlee@gmail.com).

NOTE: Please bring a two-way radio if you have one to make communication easier among members of the same caravan.

LODGING OPTIONS
The Highland Inn at 68 West Main Street in Monterey is the only hotel, and we’ve blocked all 18 rooms. Special room rates range from $99 to $139 (plus tax), depending on the type of room you reserve. Check-in time is 2:00 PM, and check-out is 11:00 AM. There are coffee makers in all rooms and no refrigerators, but you can store food in the Inn’s large refrigerator. Call (540) 468-2143 make reservations at the Inn.

The Montvallee Motel is closed, with no re-open date set at this time. There are many other lodging options in the County, and a few are in town right on Main Street. The link to the complete list is: http://www.highlandcounty.org/for-the-visitor/lodging/

NOTE: Contact VSO member Patti Reum (pareum@gmail.com) about the 2 properties she has available - South Branch Farm (sleeps up to 8) and Eagle Annie’s (sleeps 2).

Meredith and Lee Bell have already booked Rainbow Springs Retreat so they can host an afternoon field trip and social time/dinner on Friday.

If you don’t mind a 45-60 minute commute, there are also many hotel options in Staunton.

DIRECTIONS TO MONTEREY
From I-81, take Exit 225 West, Woodrow Wilson Parkway. The Parkway will take you to U.S. 250 West. Follow U.S. 250 West to Monterey. U.S. 250 becomes Main Street in Monterey.

MEALS
Meals are on your own except for optional Friday dinner (see below). The Inn no longer has a restaurant, but High’s across the street serves all 3 meals. A complimentary continental breakfast is included for those staying at the Inn, and they’ll open for us at 7:00 AM on Saturday and Sunday. For Saturday’s all-day field trip, you can order sandwiches in advance from a local restaurant.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING
1:30 PM – Meet at Forks of Water (5 miles north of Monterey on Rt 220). Located at the headwaters of the Potomac River, this spot has nesting orioles, sparrows, warblers, vireos, Least Flycatcher and Cedar Waxwing. Those staying at the Highland Inn can meet in the parking lot behind the Inn at 1:15 PM to form carpools.

Next, we’ll drive to nearby Rainbow Springs Retreat, a restored farmhouse with fantastic birding on the property. Nesting birds include both orioles, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow Warbler, Cedar Waxwing and more. Lee and Meredith Bell will lead a leisurely exploration, then host a dinner and ask each participant to chip in to cover the cost of food. Additional details will be provided to all registrants closer to the date. Bring your favorite beverage AND lawn chair. Plan to enjoy an absolutely lovely setting with views of the mountains and the songs of several bird species serenading us as sunset approaches.

SATURDAY FIELD TRIP
7:45 AM - This will be an all-day field trip, so you’ll need to bring snacks, lunch and beverages. Meet in the parking lot behind the Highland Inn at 7:45 AM on Saturday to organize carpools for the day. We’ll travel north and west, covering Blue Grass Valley, Straight Fork, Laurel Fork, and Locust Springs. With the various habitats we’ll cover, we expect to see these warbler species: Canada, Blackburnian, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Yellow, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green. Other target birds include Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager, Veery, Vesper and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Bobolinks.

SATURDAY EVENING
Dinner is on your own.

SUNDAY FIELD TRIP
7:45 AM - We’ll explore some private property in the Blue Grass area on Sunday morning (20-minute drive). Target birds include Golden-winged, Yellow, Magnolia and Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-billed Cuckoo, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Black-capped Chickadee, Least Flycatcher and Cliff Swallow. Those staying at or near the Highland Inn will meet in the parking lot behind the Inn at 7:45 AM to form carpools.

TRIP REGISTRATION
To help us plan for the number of leaders and groups we’ll need for the field trips, please register in advance. Provide the names of participants in your party, a telephone number and email address so we can contact you if needed. Register with Meredith Bell at merandlee@gmail.com or call 804-824-4958.

- Meredith Bell
At the start of the VSO Virginia Beach weekend the Friday morning trip to the CBBT began with a pair of Harlequin Ducks that were spotted from Island 2, as were Surf and Black Scoters, Red-throated and Common Loons, Sanderling, Purple Sandpipers, and Great Cormorants. From Island 4 several Horned Larks and American Pipits were seen.

The highlights of the rest of the day on a whirlwind trip around the lower Eastern Shore led by Rexanne Bruno were a Gray Kingbird atop what looked to be a scarecrow at Yaros Farms, a trip to the Cheriton Landfill where Black-crowned Night-Herons were counted, and two White-winged Doves at ESVNWR. Back at the hotel for the tally, treats and drinks were shared in the hospitality room.

On Saturday we headed out across the CBBT. Stopping first at Magotha Rd where Dunlin and Greater Yellowlegs hunted the edge of marsh grass, we spotted a Surf Scoter. Three Eurasian Collared-Doves flushed out of a magnolia tree and perched for full inspection. Hoping for closer views of the Gray Kingbird we swung by Arlington Road but the bird wasn’t visible. The flats at Willis Wharf held 357 Marbled Godwits, many Willets, and a few Dunlin. A Belted Kingfisher perched on some poles at the end of a wharf and a flock of Ruddy Turnstones flew in to land on the metal breakwater.

After a quick bite of lunch, we set out for Chincoteague, stopping first at Queen’s Sound Landing to see American Oystercatchers on the oyster bars. The Brant we sought were not in the usual close spot but I thought I saw them out near the duck blinds. One of our group confirmed and we all got views through the scope.

The plan to drive straight down to the beach was derailed by American Wigeon and American Black Ducks in a pool, Brown-headed Nuthatches in the pines, and by large groups of Greater Yellowlegs and Tricolored Herons in Swan Cove. A quick perusal of fly-over plovers, revealed that all had black wing pits and were Black-bellied Plovers. We hurried to the Wildlife Loop shortly after its opening. While lots of phragmites and very little water were what we found in Snow Goose Pool, we did find abundant waterfowl in Shoveler Pool. Green-winged Teal, Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, Northern Pintails, and the namesake, Northern Shovelers, were hanging out with a Pied-billed Grebe. Back at the hotel a hardy few made it to the tally & helped eat and drink the leftovers from Friday night.

On Sunday morning the tram trip at Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park allowed views of the gorgeous scenery. Instead of the bitterly cold, windy & wet weather we have had for the last two years the day was mild and occasionally sunny.

At a stop on the way to False Cape State Park we startled an American Bittern into flight. Tundra Swans and an assortment of waterfowl were seen: Ruddy Ducks, Northern Pintails, Red-breasted and Hooded Mergansers, American Wigeon, American Coots and Pied-billed Grebes. Other birds of interest were Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets, Bald Eagles and Northern Harriers, Northern Gannets and Red-throated Loons. Two Red-tailed Hawks perched in the tops of adjacent low trees. Thinking that somehow we had struck out on Snow Geese for the weekend we were excited to see a flock of 45 circle the impoundments. One immature White Ibis and one Tricolored Heron added to the diversity. We searched a flock of 400 Common Grackles in the tops of several trees along the tram road for rarities with no luck.

The weekend tally, including 6 species seen by some of the participants who went on Brian Patteson’s pelagic trip, was 133.
The Virginia Society of Ornithology Newsletter  Spring 2016

Report of the 2016 VSO Outer Banks Field Trip

Mother Nature presented a few challenges for the February 5-7, 2016, VSO trip to the Outer Banks, but that did not prevent the 100+ attendees from having a fabulous birding experience, with 136 species tallied for the weekend.

The people always make the trip! Special thanks to James Madison University professor Charles (Zig) Ziegenfus for bringing 12 students who arrived early so they could participate in all three days. We also had several other teen birders whose unbounded enthusiasm was contagious. Their excitement about each bird they saw added to everyone’s enjoyment of the weekend. We especially appreciate our wonderful trip leaders - Lee Adams, Bill Akers, Jerry Via and Mike Schultz - who did an outstanding job of making sure participants in their groups saw as many species as possible.

The Friday trip to Lake Mattamuskeet was delayed by an hour because of weather conditions. Due to heavy rains the day before, we weren’t able to travel one of the roads where we usually get several wren and sparrow species, so those numbers were lower than usual. Still, there were lots of birds to enjoy, including a breathtaking number of Snow Geese seen on the way. We tallied many species of waterfowl. Once again, an American Bittern put on quite a show for everyone. After the sun came out, Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-crowned Warbler and a group of six Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were seen. On the way out, a few lucky people got to see a Bobcat on one of the dikes.

Saturday morning we explored Oregon Inlet and Pea Island. At the marina, the highlight was thousands of Redhead Ducks with many Scaup mixed in. South of Bonner Bridge, Purple Sandpiper and Great Cormorant were spotted. And Pea Island visitor’s center held two of our favorites - American White Pelican and American Avocet. Many birders gathered after lunch at Jennette’s Pier, a magnificent structure providing easy birding and close-up looks at many species, such as Northern Gannett, Red-throated Loon, Red-breasted Merganser and a lone Razorbill. A few participants saw a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Painted Buntings at a residence in Manteo. Late in the day we met at Bodie Island to view the abundant waterfowl in the impoundments. Several people stayed until dark and were rewarded with a Great Horned Owl.

Sunday’s forecast for rain and strong winds caused many people to head home early. A big surprise was the spotting of a coyote on the beach outside the breakfast area. We assume he was trying to find a meal among the gulls. Bill Akers and Jerry Via led participants to Alligator River NWR where they were able to get in birding before the rain. No new species were seen but those who attended enjoyed exploring this wonderful habitat.

Total for the weekend was 136 species sighted (not including the mammals). - Meredith Bell
VSO Field Trip Co-chair

Please renew your VSO membership for 2016!

Now is the time to renew so you don’t miss anything! Your VSO membership runs from January to December. We have already sent out the first round of renewal reminders by USPS and by Constant Contact. And we are grateful to all who have renewed for 2016! We appreciate your prompt payment.

Save the VSO much needed funds by renewing soon so we can avoid mailing out second reminders.

Use the form on the back of the newsletter or renew online (safely and easily with your debit or credit card) at the VSO website: [http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO-Store.html](http://www.virginiabirds.net/VSO-Store.html)

We hope you will add something extra to your renewal to support our upcoming Breeding Bird Atlas or the continuing American Kestrel Nest Box Project. All donations and dues are tax deductible – VSO is a 501(c)3 organization.

Keep in mind that non-members have to pay a $20 fee (individual) or $25 fee (family of 2 or more) to participate in VSO field trips. Please make sure your membership is up to date to avoid the hassle of paying at the last minute. If you have questions about your VSO membership status, feel free to contact Shirley Devan, Membership Secretary, at: vsomembership@cox.net

- Meredith Bell
VSO Field Trip Co-chair
On December 20, 2015 the Williamsburg Bird Club and friends broke two century marks! A total of 101 participants tallied 117 bird species in the Williamsburg count circle on a beautifully clear 52° F day. The species count fell just short of last year’s record 120 species for our circle, but this was only the second year in our history (the first was 2013) when the number of participants, field observers and feeder watchers combined, topped 100. At this rate the day will come when the participants outnumber the species!

The most astonishing record came with a plethora of Bald Eagles. Bald Eagles are increasing and nearly every year for the last decade our CBC tally inches up a few more birds than the year before. But the 2015 total of 95 Bald Eagles absolutely crushed the record 65 birds found in 2014. The birds were sighted in all eleven of our count circle areas with a high of 16 in Gloucester and with Kingsmill not far behind at 15.

Chapter Updates

The Monticello Bird Club’s Board of Directors met during August of 2015 and set ambitious goals for the 2015 – 2016 fiscal year. The Board proposed a community outreach project, sponsored jointly by the MBC and the Blue Young Birders Club, to involve youth in the conservation and enjoyment of birds. The project was a poster contest, open to grades K – 8 from Charlottesville, Albemarle and Nelson counties. The project was a resounding success with over 70 entries. The prizes were funded by our best-ever birdseed sale. The birdseed sale was organized and run by a group of enthusiastic MBC volunteers.

Slate of Officer and Director Candidates for 2016-2017

The Nominating Committee, Joe Coleman (Chair), Lesley Bulluck, Dan Bieker, and Bill Williams, are proposing the following slate of officers and directors for the consideration of the membership at the business meeting of the 2016 Annual Meeting, April 29 – May 1 which will be held at the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center, Roanoke, Virginia. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

OFFICERS:

President: Jeff Trollinger
Vice-President: Lenny Bankester
Past President: Joe Coleman
Treasurer: Terri Cuthriell
Secretary: Shirley Devan
Membership Secretary: Andrew Dolby
Editor, The Raven: Len Alfredson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, Class of 2019:

Lesley Bulluck — came on the Board in 2015 to serve out the last year of the Class of 2016. Lesley is a faculty member in the Department of Biology at Virginia Commonwealth University researching population ecology, behavior, and conservation biology of birds.

Dan Bieker — is currently completing his first 3-year term on the Board of Directors. Dan has been a member of VSO since 1986 and is now an Assistant Professor of Natural Sciences at Piedmont Virginia Community College and is a Past President of the Ivy Creek Foundation.

Bill Williams — is currently completing his a 3-year term on the Board of Directors. Bill, who has been a member of VSO since 1971 and is currently the editor of Virginia Birds, has served previously as VSO Treasurer, Vice-President, and President.

As of early February the Nominating Committee is still searching for a candidate for Secretary — if you are interested, or know someone who is, please email the Chair, Joe Coleman, at joecoleman@rstarmail.com.

VSO Bids Warm Welcome to Our New Members

David Williams, Clayton, NC
Kathryn Warman, Warrenton, VA
Dana Spontak, Virginia Beach, VA
Amy Neale, Rochelle, VA
Bruce Grimes and Betsy Davies, Christiansburg, VA
John Shea, Bridgewater, VA
John Ogburn, Blacksburg, VA
James Hill, Brogue, PA
Bonnie Bernstein, Lexington, VA
James Fox, Front Royal, VA
Meredith Pack, Bowling Green, VA
Robert Coles, Richmond, VA
Paula Neff, West Cape May, NJ
Daniel Kendrick, New Bern, NC
Hanne Hansen, Fredericksburg, VA
Hans Heinjz, Culpeper, VA
Kate Lowry, Lynchburg, VA

Chapter Updates

On December 20, 2015 the Williamsburg Bird Club and friends broke two century marks! A total of 101 participants tallied 117 bird species in the Williamsburg count circle on a beautifully clear 52° F day. The species count fell just short of last year’s record 120 species for our circle, but this was only the second year in our history (the first was 2013) when the number of participants, field observers and feeder watchers combined, topped 100. At this rate the day will come when the participants outnumber the species!

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2016 VSO Membership Renewal

Name & Address:__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________

Email Address:__________________________________________________________

Please check here if you wish to receive your VSO NEWSLETTER and VIRGINIA BIRDS by email via Constant Contact. Print your email address clearly ------ You may opt out of these Constant Contact email notices at any time

__ Contributing Membership $60
__ Sustaining Membership $35
__ Family Membership $25
__ Active Membership $20
__ Student Membership $10
__ Life Membership $500

I would like to make an additional donation to:
$_______ VSO Conservation Fund
$_______ American Kestrel Nest Box Project
$_______ Breeding Bird Atlas Project
$_______ VSO General Fund

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
VSO Annual Meeting April 29-May 1, 2016
Registration Form

Please print names as they should appear on nametags

Name 1: ____________________________________________
Name 2: ____________________________________________
Name 3: ____________________________________________
Name 4: ____________________________________________

Mailing address: ____________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Email address: ____________________________________________

Primary phone: __________________________ Alternate phone: __________________________

Registration Fee: $40 x ______ (# attending) = $ ________

Banquet: $36 x ______ (# attending) = $ ________

Please indicate number for entrée choice: Pork: # _______ Chicken: # _______ Vegetarian: # _______

Win a chance to bird with Pete Dunne Saturday morning! Purchase as many tickets as you want. Couples who both want to bird with him should purchase couples tickets. Winners will be notified prior to the meeting.

Singles ticket: $10 x ______ (# raffle tickets) = $ ________

Couples ticket: $20 x ______ (# raffle tickets) = $ ________

Total amount enclosed (registration, banquet, and Pete Dunne raffle tickets) $ ________

Make check payable to: Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Mail completed form and check to:

VSO 2016 Annual Meeting
Norris Ford
3322 Kingsbury Circle
Roanoke, VA 24014

MEETING REGISTRATION
DEADLINE APRIL 19

For Annual Meeting inquiries, contact Alyce Quinn at twoquinns@yahoo.com or 540-719-0109.