



VSO Newsletter

A Publication of the Virginia Society of Ornithology

Website: www.viriniabirds.org eBird: ebird.org/content/va/ Facebook: [Virginia Society of Ornithology](https://www.facebook.com/VirginiaSocietyofOrnithology)
Listserve: mailman.listserve.com/listmanager/listinfo/va-bird

VA Breeding Bird Atlas - Summer Update!

Summer is here, at least as far as breeding birds are concerned! As May progresses and migration wains, we head into the heart of the 2017 breeding season, our second year of the VA Breeding Bird Atlas project. Season two has already demonstrated Atlas volunteers kicking their Atlas efforts up to a new level. Since January of this year, **12,000 new checklists** have been submitted to the Atlas eBird portal, **230 new volunteers** have contributed data bringing the total

to 680 participants, AND the project has now received observations in **over 50% of all Atlas blocks!** Additionally, **46 counties** have more than doubled their Atlas effort (hours/county) since March! At this rate, Virginia birders are on track to collect more than double the amount of breeding bird observations in 2017, a key goal for the project.

To that end, here are a couple reminders about summer birding... While migration is often the peak time for birders to be in the field, June and July are great months for collecting breeding evidence. By June, migrants and resident species are well along in their breeding cycles. Residents may be working on fledging their second clutch of chicks, while migrants are working on their first. Song rates are likely to decline as the season warms, but bird activity levels often actually increase. It is hard work to keep a clutch of babies going and the frantic efforts of parents often provide birders with breeding confirmations through codes like Carrying Food (CF), Feeding Young (FY) and Fledged or downy young (FL).

For those of you who live in coastal or low-lying areas that become quite steamy in July and August, consider taking a little trip to central or western VA. Temperatures are cooler, bird activity high through July and August, and many areas are still in great need of breeding data. A quick glance at the Atlas Block Explorer map or Atlas eBird portal will reveal areas in need of birding effort. Contact your regional coordinator for advice and suggestions on planning such birding forays. They are eager and waiting to facilitate your Atlas efforts!

Lastly, this spring the VABBA2 project held five major training sessions around the state with the help of our local partners and volunteers. These events allowed over 100 volunteers to receive in-depth training on Atlas field and data entry techniques, as well as to ask questions of experienced Atlas volunteers. We had a lot of fun birding and working with these participants and will continue these sessions in 2018. The Atlas project leadership couldn't be more excited by the effort and enthusiasm shown by both our new and veteran Atlas volunteers in this second season.

Happy Birding this summer and remember to log those breeding codes on checklists through the VABBA2 eBird portal. Let the breeding birds help you fight those summer doldrums!

~ Ashley Peele, State Coordinator,
VA Breeding Bird Atlas 2
www.vabba2.org
<http://ebird.org/atlasva>



BBA Workshop participants at Mt. Rogers Naturalist Rally

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Summer 2017

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Membership Merchandise
Available - Page 3

President's Message:

I have enjoyed my time as president and I hope I have served the VSO well. It was not a duty I accepted lightly and I know many times life and my job took precedence over VSO duties. I was incredibly fortunate to have a vice president and past president who supported me and filled in when necessary. For this I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Lenny Bankester and Joe Coleman. I truly could not have done it without them.

I hope during my term that we have opened a path forward for the VSO to effectively utilize our resources for the benefit of bird conservation in Virginia. We are extremely fortunate to have had great presidents and boards in the past who established a very strong financial foundation for the VSO. But strong foundations are useless, if you never build on them. Our current board and officers strongly believe that there are many great ongoing research and conservation efforts that are worthy of the organization's support. The challenge is deciding which projects provide the best investment and then how much and



when to support each of those projects. The 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas is just one example. The VSO's significant support for this project will lay the ground work for not only studying changes since the last Atlas in the 1980's, but also the benchmark for years to come. The amount of effort and data that VSO volunteers have already contributed rivals what was completed in five years during the last Atlas. That is truly an amazing accomplishment and I personally look forward to what we can do for the remaining three and one-half years.

I hope each of you will examine how you support avian conservation efforts. Each of us has unique gifts, talents and resources to contribute. The VSO needs a myriad of gifted and capable people to carry out its mission. Someone once told me they didn't feel they had a calling because they were just "ordinary" and couldn't do anything "special". Some of the most ordinary people in the world have accomplished great things and many moments in history were made because a group of ordinary people pulled together and made a difference.

So I will leave you with a paraphrased Irish blessing. May the path rise to meet your feet gently. May the sun be always at your back to make the birds easier to see. May the breeze blow gently to keep the mosquitos down and the birds up. May it never rain on your one day in the field and may you be well until we meet again! Good Birding!!

- Jeff Trollinger, President
Virginia Society of Ornithology

Craney Island Trip - Friday August 18, 2017

Meet at 4599 River Shore Road, Portsmouth, VA. Arrive at 7:30AM to enter the compound at 7:45.

We will have 15 minutes to sign-in and listen to a safety announcement. Trip around Craney Island will be from 8AM until 11AM and we will be following one leader and stopping where they choose. Carpooling is required. Please wear closed-toe shoes to the Craney Island trip as the Army Corps of Engineers requires. Please do not arrive before 7:30 and do not park in driveways, either private or the one for Craney, or on any grassy areas. Limit of 25 people.

Due to expected construction this date may be changed by the Army Corps of Engineers. Contact Lee Adams to register at leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com or 540-850-0777.

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Change of Address and requests for electronic delivery:

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

Submissions may be edited for style or length.

2017 Submission Schedule

Issue	Copy Due
Fall 2017	Aug 11, 2017
Winter 2017	Oct 29, 2017
Spring 2018	Jan 26, 2018
Summer 2018	May 18, 2018

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

Up and Coming

eBird Hotspot Birding

- Nick Newberry



A persistent issue in birding, as old as the hobby itself, is beginning to improve thanks to a new wave of interest in the eBird “Explore Hotspots” tool. As is the natural human tendency, birders are often creatures of habit especially when it comes to the places we bird. Watching birds at the same local places with regularity throughout the year, also known as patch birding, leads to invaluable understanding of local avifauna. This routine often lends itself to regular neglect of many easily accessible and birdy areas. The same

focus on a small number of well-birded hotspots pervades birding itineraries far from the local patch. A little research using the “Explore Hotspots” function can help with both better understanding of an area and improved odds of finding great birds.

Here’s how to be a better hotspot birder. Under the Explore Data tab of eBird sits the “Explore Hotspots” tool. Clicking on this tool opens a detailed map of thousands of “hotspots,” defined by eBird as public birding locations created by eBird users. As you browse the hotspots in your region of interest, you will quickly realize that many of the hotspots have not recorded hundreds of species as you might assume a hotspot would. In fact, most have 50 or fewer species recorded. One of the most common misperceptions about hotspots is that they highlight only locations with the highest bird diversity. However, they serve a much greater service to the birding community than this, which is to call attention to, and aggregate sightings of, birds at accessible birding locations. One further common misunderstanding is that rare birds are more likely to show up at well-known hotspots, however some recent notable rarities have shown up at under-birded places, proving this notion false. Examples of this include, the Northern Shrike (Fairfax Co.), Wood Stork (Augusta Co.), and Prairie Falcon (City of Alexandria). Many of these locations fall near heavily birded hotspots, but are ignored for no better reason than that not many other people bird them, an element of herd mentality that has likely cost the birding community chances to see many beautiful and rare birds.

So, next time you go birding try checking out a hotspot that isn’t visited often or bring attention to a promising piece of habitat by suggesting it as a hotspot. By visiting birding spots classified as eBird Hotspots, you will undoubtedly find yourself visiting nontraditional locations such as sports parks, small county parks, or boat ramps that you might typically pass right over, but the birds you find may well be worth the departure from your typical habits. Who knows, if you’re lucky you may find the next new locally famous birding hotspot, or bird.

The benefits of exploring the eBird hotspot tool do not stop with suggestions of new places to bird. Take some time to explore the unique profile pages for each hotspot, which contain information on the total and newly added species, high counts, bar charts and printable checklists for the location. Continuing to the right side of the page you will find two more features. The first shows recently submitted checklists, perfect for seeing what you might expect to see before venturing out to a new place. The second shows the top eBirders for the hotspot, how many hotspots can you become the top eBirder at? It is easier than you think with the now numerous hotspots across the state.

Good luck and have fun with the new tool, it might be one of the most useful to come out of the eBird project yet.

VSO Merchandise Available for a Modest Donation

Now you can get VSO wearable merchandise anytime of the year. In addition to VSO Arm patches (\$4) and Cloisonné pins (\$5), you can receive t-shirts and caps with the VSO logo from Membership Secretary Shirley Devan for a modest donation.

You have a choice of two cap colors – blue or tan with the VSO logo embroidered on the front.

T-shirts come in five colors: blue, burgundy, white, green, and tan in unisex sizes small to extra large. [Sorry – no small sizes in green or tan; no extra large size in white]

For a donation of \$12, we will send you a shirt; for a donation of \$15 we will send you a cap.

Special offers:

- Shirt + hat for \$20 donation + free shipping
- Shirt + pin + patch for \$15 donation + free shipping
- Free shipping for two or more shirts/hats or a pin or a patch
- Shipping and handling \$5.00 for single items except patches and pins

Send your order and donation (check payable to VSO) to VSO, PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188. Or email Shirley Devan, vsomembership@cox.net with your order or questions.

Murray Award Recipients in 2017

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.

Murray award recipients for 2017:

Erin Heller (VT) - \$1000

- Confirming the dietary composition of the red knot using VA barrier island spring stopover habitat

Jessica Hernandez (VT) - \$1000

- Sexually transmitted microbes as a cost of extra-pair mating in female birds

Nicholas Flanders (ODU) - \$500

- Using remote cameras to assess the diversity of avian frugivores that use oak mistletoe in forested wetlands in SE VA

Chance Hines (ODU) - \$500

- Hackberry: potential keystone of fall migratory songbird stopover habitat

2016 Jackson Abbott Conservation Award Winner

We are pleased to announce that **James Roderick (Rick) Webb** is the recipient of the 2016 Jackson Abbott Conservation Award. Rick was formally nominated by William Funk, a journalist and environmental lawyer from Staunton, VA. There were four letters of support for his nomination. Sandy Bratton, Past President of BHBC who says “there is no one more deserving of this award”; Keith Carson, current President Of BHBC and former VSO board member; Lew Freeman, Highland Co. resident and environmental activist; and John Spahr, past VSO president and current member of the Conservation Committee. They all call Rick a “natural resource champion”!

Rick was born and raised in Waynesboro, Virginia. He graduated from Fishburne Military Academy and attended the College of William and Mary. He obtained his BA from Davis and Elkins in Elkins, West Virginia, and went on to graduate from UVA with a Master’s Degree in Environmental Science. He was employed as a Senior Scientist for that department until his “retirement” in 2014.

His career has focused on “scientific investigation, analysis, and assessment contributing to the preservation of ecosystem integrity in the forested mountains of western Virginia and the central Appalachian region”.

He has worked to prevent development of the mountain ridgelines from industrial scale wind projects, specifically in Highland County and the Laurel Fork wilderness area focusing on environmental protection. He has served as Wind Turbine Advisor for the VSO, and has also been a member of the Conservation Committee.

More recently Rick has worked in opposition to pipeline development across the Appalachian region. He is on the board and steering committee of several environmental organizations, including: Appalachian-Blue Ridge Alliance, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and Highlanders for Responsible Development. He serves as Program Coordinator of the Dominion Pipeline Monitoring Coalition.

For the Bath-Highland Bird club, Rick and his wife Susan worked with Yulee Larner to assemble records and produce an annotated listing of bird observations in Bath and Highland counties.

Rick is a very deserving winner and we know he will work tirelessly to continue his conservation efforts.

2017 Mitchell A. Byrd Award

The Mitchell A. Byrd Award, established in 2011, recognizes outstanding scientific achievement in the field of ornithology. Recipients have demonstrated an exceptional record of contribution to the scientific knowledge of Virginia's birds through evidence including, but not limited to, publications such as papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals and books or book chapters derived from the candidates' original scientific research, conference presentations, recommendation letters from scientific peers, and other forms of peer recognition (e.g. an award from a national scholarly society).

Dr. Sarah Karpanty is the recipient of the 2017 Mitchell Byrd Award. Dr. Karpanty is an Associate Professor in the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech where she also serves as the Assistant Department Head and Graduate Program Coordinator. She earned her PhD in Ecology and Evolution from Stony Brook University and has been at VirginiaTech since 2004. Her research focuses on applied behavioral and population ecology with a focus on coastal systems. Some noteworthy projects include the interactions between predators and shorebirds (including red foxes and piping plover), long term monitoring of red knots, and the effects of sea level rise on Atlantic Coast piping plover populations. She is an extremely productive scientist, raising more than \$14 million since 2004 and authoring more than 50 peer reviewed publications and three book chapters.

Learn more about Sarah's research both in the US and Madagascar here: <http://www.fishwild.vt.edu/faculty/karpanty/index.htm>

Save the Dates Upcoming Events and Trips

Wearable VSO Merchandise Sale - happening now!

Craney Island Field Trip, August 18, 2017 - More details on page 2

Chincoteague Field Trip, September 16 - 18, 2016

Virginia Beach Trip, December 1, 2 and 3 - Details in next issue



See page 3 for details on how to order.

VIRGINIA SOCIETY OF ORNITHOLOGY TREASURER'S REPORT CONDENSED 2016 CALENDAR YEAR

BEGINNING BALANCES January 1, 2016:	
General Fund	\$38,504.74
Restricted Funds	\$152,973.02
Total	\$191,477.76
RECEIPTS:	
Dues	\$19,577.73
Other General	\$3,089.67
Endowment Fund	\$2,019.67
Life Memberships	\$500.00
Murray Fund	\$478.98
Conservation Fund	\$591.30
Kestrel Fund	\$1,615.64
VABBAll Fund	\$3,393.43
Total	\$31,266.42

DISBURSEMENTS:	
General Fund	\$22,456.41
Endowment	\$250.00
Murray Award	\$1,000.00
Conservation fund	\$4,873.00
Kestrel Fund	\$2,147.67
VABBAll Fund	\$1,727.25
Total	\$32,454.33

ENDING BALANCES December 31, 2016:	
General Fund	\$56,491.17
Restricted Funds	\$133,798.68
ENDING BALANCE	\$190,289.85

Terri S. Cuthriell, Treasurer

VSO Fall Field Trip, Chincoteague, VA September 15-17, 2017

Every fall is different at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, so join us to discover the surprises that await us on this year's annual fall VSO trip, September 15-17. Last year we tallied 129 species, including a terrific combination of waterfowl, shorebirds and migrating songbirds.

TRIP REGISTRATION

To help us plan for the weekend, please register in advance. Provide the names of participants in your party with your mobile number and email address so we can contact you if needed. Register with Meredith Bell, trip coordinator, at merandlee@gmail.com or 804-824-4958. If you're also registering for one of the bus trips to Wash Flats (see below), be sure to state your preferred day.

HEADQUARTERS

The Refuge Inn on Beach Road in Chincoteague will be the host hotel (800-544-8469 or 757-336-5511). Room rates are \$114.75 (plus tax) per night for a single or a double room, minimum two night stay. For those arriving a day early or staying an extra day, the rate for Thursday and Sunday nights will be \$102. The Refuge Inn is non-smoking and no pets are allowed. To assure the VSO rate, **make reservations by August 15** and state you are with the VSO when you call.

MEALS

Meals are on your own. The Refuge Inn offers a complimentary continental breakfast for guests and will open early for us for breakfast at 7:00am. Chincoteague is known for its fine dining and you will be

able to choose from any number of excellent restaurants.

CHECK-IN

Check-in time is 4:00PM. After you check in at the hotel on Friday, be sure to pick up a schedule of events for the weekend at the VSO headquarters, located in the Conference room at the far end of the Refuge Inn. The Conference room will be open Friday from 4:30-5:30PM and re-open at 7:15PM.

FRIDAY EVENING

An evening orientation and slide program will be presented in the Conference room by trip leaders Jerry Via and Bill Akers. Due the size of the room, we will have two sessions, at 7:30PM and 8:45PM. Jerry and Bill will also give a preview of birds in the area and a synopsis of the field trips for the weekend.

SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS

You can select from a variety of field trip experiences: "Morning Warbler Walk" on the Woodland Trail to look for migrating songbirds; "Motorcade to Assateague Beach," with frequent stops to look at shorebirds; and "Birding and Biking" (Sat only) to explore the wildlife loop. (No cars are allowed until 3:00PM, so it's a safe, easy ride. If you don't have a bike, you can rent one at the shop next to the Refuge Inn.) We'll also offer two bus trips (Sat and Sun) and a Birding Boat trip (Sat only).

WASH FLATS BUS TRIP – ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

We have arranged for two bus trips to the Wash Flats: at **3:00PM** on

Saturday and **8:00AM** on **Sunday**. This is a restricted area in the refuge and can only be entered with special permission. The shorebirds and raptors are often abundant in this area. The bus has a capacity for 25 people. The cost per person is \$13. If you want to go on this trip, you must make a reservation and specify your preferred day with Meredith Bell, at merandlee@gmail.com or 804-824-4958. Payment will be made at the registration area when you arrive on Friday (exact change is appreciated). If you are unable to attend after making your reservation, please contact Meredith so that she can open up your space for someone else. This is a popular trip and fills up quickly, so we recommend that you register early.

BOAT TRIP SATURDAY, 16th – ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUIRED

There will be a special birding by boat trip **Saturday** at **10:00AM** (two hours) with a local boat captain and his crew. You have a chance to check out the marshes and tidal flats up-close during low tide for interesting water birds and raptors. You must pay in advance and get a ticket. Between 8:30am-5:30 PM, go to Daisey's Island Cruises, 3335 Main Street (blue boat house, with white fence in front) and pay \$33 (cash or check) or \$35 (credit card) per person. Bring cash for tip (to crew) on the boat. Departure is from the Curtis Merritt Marina at the Sound end of Chincoteague Island, 2246 Curtis Merritt Lane. Be there 15 minutes before departure. (Note: The boat can hold up to 100 people!).

Contact Meredith Bell at merandlee@gmail.com or 804-824-4958 to register.

SATURDAY EVENING

We will have a tally of the day's species at 6:30PM in the Conference room.

SUNDAY MORNING

We will repeat many of the field trips from Saturday, so you will

have a chance to sample many different areas. Check out time from most of the motels is 11:00AM.

OTHER LODGING IN THE AREA

If you are unable to get a room at the Refuge Motor Inn, you may want to try these motels close by: Best Western (800-553-6117),

Days Inn (800-329-1992) and Sea Hawk (757-336-6527).

For additional information about lodging and restaurant options, check out the Chincoteague town website:

www.chincoteaguechamber.com

TheVSO Extends a Warm Welcome to Our Newest Members

Logan Anderson, Lynchburg, VA
Patty Arrington, Goodview, VA
Morgan Barksdale, Charlottesville, VA
James Beard, Martinsville, VA
Judith Booker, Falls Church, VA
Robert Butterworth, Springfield, VA
Victoria Callahan, Springfield, VA
Scott Campbell, Front Royal, VA
Allen Carter, VA Beach, VA
Katherine and George Clemo, Roanoke, VA
Harry Colestock, Gloucester, VA
Bob Crawford, Roanoke, VA
David Dienner, Scottsville, VA

Theresa Duffey, Mechanicsville, VA
Eileen Geller, Henrico, VA
Susan Gier, Singers Glen, VA
Andrew Hawkins, Yorktown, VA
Dana Hawley, Blacksburg, VA
Peggy Herbert, Cedar Bluff, VA
Patricia Kaiser, Reston, VA
Daniel Lebbin, Vienna, VA
Enrique Manriquez, Vienna, VA
Jake McCormick, Kensington, MD
Tracey Mershon, Suffolk, VA
Philip James Mitchell, Alexandria, VA
Michael and Lisa Morris, Statesville, NC
Joyce Neff, Norfolk, VA

Robert Pickett, McLean, VA
John Roberts, Richmond, VA
Cassy Robertson, Winchester, VA
Tyler Smith, Victoria, VA
Dianne Snyder, Newport News, VA
Jacqueline Spencer, Hampton, VA
William Stewart, Sandston, VA
Barbara Stewart, Annandale, VA
Mandana Szkotak, Richmond, VA
Wes Teets, Richmond, VA
Ross Varin, Richmond, VA
Nicola Williamson, Richmond, VA
Charles Woodrich, Glen Allen, VA

Craney Island Trip Report, April 23, 2017

On Friday morning, April 21, 23 VSO members met at Craney Island for a field trip. Bill Williams and Mitchell Byrd of CVWO, led the caravan. Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory supports the on-going survey which continues Ruth Beck's long-standing conservation and education efforts at Craney Island and several other coastal Virginia sites. <http://www.cvwo.org/>

Black-necked Stilts, Dunlin, Dowitchers and Yellowlegs awaited us at the first stop, an impoundment cell on the south side. Jason Strickland did an awesome job of keeping the eBird list. Clark Schweigaard Olsen drove Bob Ake with his broken leg to the best possible spots to see birds from the truck. A pair of American Oystercatchers shared a rock jetty with an immature Bald Eagle. American Avocets leisurely fed at another cell. A Peregrine Falcon was spotted surveying the shorebird lunch buffet. A Least Tern flew in and patrolled back and forth, perhaps looking for the best nesting spot. Northern Shovelers, Ruddy Ducks, Gadwall and Blue & Green-winged Teal tried to keep as much distance between us and them as possible. A Horned Grebe and a Red-throated Loon were seen out toward the I-664 bridge/tunnel. All too soon the field trip was over. Some folks decided to visit Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve a mile, or two, away. A Hooded Warbler teased with its song but rewarded Kathy Louthan's persistence with a pose or two for her camera. Among many other finds at Hoffer Creek were a Black and White Warbler, an Ovenbird and a Red-eyed Vireo.

Thanks to Shannon Reinheimer, from the Army Corps of Engineers, and to the Corps, for allowing access to this site. Great appreciation goes to Bill Williams and Mitchell Byrd who continue the bird survey work at Craney Island and are building on the bank of critical knowledge about the birds that use Craney as a stop-over in migration and those that nest there.

VSO Officers

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Past President: Joe Coleman
Vice President: Lenny Bankester
Secretary: Christine Stinson
Treasurer: Terri Cuthriell
Raven Editor,
Newsletter Editor: Len Alfredson
Membership Secretary, Shirley
Devan

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Patti Reum, Highland County
Russell Taylor, Fairfax County
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Terms Expire 2019

Bill Williams, Williamsburg
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2017 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 2 Project
- \$ _____ VSO General Fund
- \$ _____ Endowment Fund
- \$ _____ Murray Award 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: An Annotated Checklist \$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.org](http://www.Virginiabirds.org)