VSO Continues International Conservation Efforts

Dominican Republic Study: Earlier this year VSO advertised a scholarship with Virginia colleges for an intern to help with a multi-year monitoring project to record avian biodiversity abundance on farms and preserved lands in the Dajabón province of the Dominican Republic. This undertaking is a partnership with Virginia NGO Earth Sangha, whose work enhances native biodiversity by supporting sustainable land management in the project area with special emphasis on shade-grown coffee and cacao.

Applications for this internship were reviewed, and VSO was happy to select Spencer Shubert from Old Dominion University. Through participating in field work the student will gain a more complete awareness of the environmental challenges in the Dominican Republic, an increased familiarity with the country’s birds and their habitat requirements, and a better understanding of the conservation needs of migrants shared by Virginia and the Dominican Republic.

Spencer is in his second year of studies in the Ecology PhD program with the Department of Biological Sciences at ODU. His dissertation research project is based in Jarabacoa, Dominican Republic, where he investigates various aspects of community ecology and seed dispersal interactions between frugivorous birds and tropical wet forest plants. His familiarity with the Dominican Republic ecology will make him a great addition to the VSO team. Our next field research visit to the Dajabón province will be later this year in the December/January timeframe. Spencer will be joined by Holly Garrod, a professional ornithologist who specializes in the birds of Hispaniola. The inclusion of Holly should create another complete team of birders, which may allow the VSO to include a new site in its research this year. - Dave Youker

Guatemala Second Annual International Field Trip: The VSO’s inaugural international field trip to Guatemala in 2017 was such a smashing success that it will return in 2018! Last April, ten VSO members tallied 354 species in Guatemala’s spectacular cloud forests, wetlands, rainforests, and dry scrublands. The group was led by Rob Cahill and his son, John, who is the foremost expert on Guatemala’s birds and where to find them! The Cahills are also the founders of Community Cloud Forest Conservation (CCFC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of Guatemala’s cloud forests through education, sustainable agriculture and economic development, and reforestation.

“What a great trip! The CFCC was also impressive. I think it’s really an effective venture and worthy of support,” said Susan Brown, former VSO board member. According to traveler Kathy Burger, “Many times John appeared to be a magician of some sort, by conjuring up specific birds at will. He was able to do this because of his diligent work scouting sites ahead of time and because of his remarkable skill in identifying bird calls.” Among the birding highlights were a successful owl prowl at Tikal National Park and Guatemala’s first Spotted Rail breeding record! With proceeds from the trip, the Cahills will reforest one acre (½ acre already complete) at a CCFC forest restoration site. (½ acre = 77 native large trees)

The 2018 trip will run March 16-25. The cost is $2,060 ($2,760 for single room occupancy), excluding air fare to and from Guatemala City. Travelers will visit Lake Atitlan, Motagua Valley, Ranchito del Quetzal, and Tikal National Park, among other stunning destinations. Registration is limited to current VSO members and will be capped at ten participants. Interested members should contact Andrew Dolby, Virginia trip liaison, by email: adolby[at]umw.edu or phone: 540-654-1420. Also, watch for announcements and further details coming soon on the VSO’s web site and the vabirds email list-serve. - Andrew Dolby
Here is a photo taken by one of the folks in Highland Co. who has a kestrel box, Louise Rexrode.
President’s Message:

Having been a member of the VSO for about seven years now and serving on the Board of Directors for much of that time, I’ve gotten to meet plenty of VSO members over the years. But since the VSO is a statewide organization with about 800 active members, I realize that there are still plenty of people who would ask: “Who are you?” and “Why do you want to be President of the VSO?”

Fair questions. I’ll do my best to answer them.

I grew up in southern Alabama and, after moving around for a few years, finally arrived in Virginia about 11 years ago. My family has found a great home here in Virginia and I consider myself to be a truly bi-cultural person now: Virginian-Alabamian. When I was a child, my family lived outside the city limits and I spent many hours running around outside. I developed a love that was like family: something that should always be there and something that you can rely on. Over the years, I started to notice that birds were one of the most conspicuous and remarkable parts of this world. The bonds that their lives make with their habitats increased my appreciation for nature and my realization that the connections in nature are fragile. If people — including me — don’t make the right choices, the nature that sustains our mental and physical well-being might not be there. I became a birder and a dedicated conservationist almost simultaneously. With the VSO being the most-tangible way to connect me deeper to the birds and geography of my new home, it only made sense to join the organization and try to increase my contribution over the years.

So, why do I want to be President of the VSO? In short, because I want to bring all of the benefits that birds have contributed to my life other people of my adopted home. My hope is that the VSO will be represented thoroughly across the Commonwealth, helping to bring an appreciation for nature to all its various peoples and regions. For this reason, I hope to build stronger connections with people who aren’t currently benefiting from birds or conservation. Given how much birds have brought to my life, it seems like the proper thing to do for others and also a wise move for the future of conservation and ornithology. That reasoning underpins our work with Fairfax County organization Earth Sangha in the Dominican Republic. In short, I am very happy with what the VSO is already doing; my goal as president it to help us do more of it with more people.

I’ll expand on these ideas as the VSO’s work continues to develop. The VSO has a great Board of Directors and collection of Officers and I know we will continue to make progress in the same manner as recent years. For now, please know that you have an enthusiastic President who is glad to have your support. Have fun out there.

- Lenny Bankester, President
Virginia Society of Ornithology

NEWSLETTER EDITOR NEEDED  Unfortunately Len Alfredson is unable to continue as newsletter editor after the end of 2017. If you or someone you know is interested let Lenny know at lennybankester@yahoo.com. It’s a great way to stay in touch with what’s happening in Virginia birding.

| Editor: Len Alfredson 1300 Crystal Drive #509 Arlington, VA 22202 vsoeditor@verizon.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. |
| Change of Address and requests for electronic delivery: Virginia Society of Ornithology PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188 vsomembership@cox.net | Submissions may be edited for style or length. |

| 2017 Submission Schedule |
| Issue | Copy Due |
| Winter 2017 | Oct 29, 2017 |
| Spring 2018 | Jan 26, 2018 |
| Summer 2018 | May 18, 2018 |
| Fall 2018 | Sep 3, 2018 |

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

- Patti Reum

This past January, John Spahr and I were asked to participate in the American Kestrel Partnership Symposium in Wilmington, Delaware. We represented the VSO at this conference and we were asked to give a 15 minute presentation on the Blue Grass Valley Monitoring and Banding Project here in Highland County. The purpose of this meeting was to bring together kestrel enthusiasts from all over the United States and Canada, including professional researchers and citizen scientists. For two solid days we heard nothing but kestrel talk. The enthusiasm was infectious. I was amazed that people traveled as far as from Alberta and Saskatchewan to attend this meeting. Keynote speaker was Dr. John Smallwood from Montclair State University. The reason we gathered was to try to figure out where the decline in this species is taking place and why. Numbers of breeding pair in New Jersey, Delaware, New England and Pennsylvania are way down. This species in endangered in Delaware, threatened in New Jersey and Connecticut. In Pennsylvania, it is listed as a species of concern. I talked with a kestrel researcher in Maryland who said he had no breeding pairs in his area.

Dr. Smallwood described how to set up kestrel boxes ONLY in good habitat. Many of the speakers stressed that nest boxes help ONLY if you have a healthy population that lives in your area. One of the goals was to come up with a protocol as to how to correctly monitor, study survival rates, and study the full annual cycle of the bird. One of the topics covered was global warming. This does have an effect on the timing of reproduction. If the weather warms up earlier in the spring, the nesting pair will take advantage of this fact and nest earlier because of availability of insects and other prey. I found that in Highland County, this was definitely the case this breeding season. Incubation occurred about 1-2 weeks earlier than last season. The researcher from Boise, Idaho said that he has found that kestrels are advancing their nesting period by about 15 days. Warm winters may also cause shorter migration distances, which may also lead to more overwintering.

A relatively new research technique is using genetic tags to find out where kestrels go when they are not breeding. In other words, is their winter distribution shifting? This involves collecting a few feather from box occupants, scanning the genome and then sending them to a lab for analysis. All researchers who have banding permits are encouraged to participate in this exciting work.

Pennsylvania has come up with an interesting way to encourage landowners to manage their land for kestrels. They reached out to farmers and recognized them as good stewards of kestrels by placing a sign on their property. Receiving recognition is a very effect way to encourage good land management. This is something that I would like to see happen here in Highland County— some way to recognize landowners who are not using pesticides and encouraging the presence of kestrels with good farming practices. One of the farmers who lives near me recounted an interesting story. He has watched his kestrel box all spring. It was time to mow the adjacent pasture. He saw that there was a young kestrel on the ground who was in danger of being killed by the tractor. So he stopped his mowing and his son placed the kestrel back in the box so as to avoid hurting the bird.

One of the things that amazed me the most is how important the role of the citizen scientist is in collecting information about kestrels. I was amazed at the dedication of some of the people who have dedicated their lives to helping these birds by setting up kestrel nesting box trails, monitoring them and then often obtaining their banding permits so they can really learn about what is going on in their area.

The last afternoon of the conference was a panel discussion where we discussed things like starlings — how to site your boxes to avoid starlings. After the breeding season ends, many of us shared our results with each other and commented on what we observed. It is good to know that there is a dedicated group of people interested in helping out the beautiful American Kestrel.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Make plans to attend the 2018 VSO Annual Meeting in Harrisonburg on the third weekend in May (May 18-20, 2018). Our keynote speaker will be Noah Strycker who saw more than half of the world’s species when he did an International Big Year in 2015.
Virginia Beach Trip December 1-3, 2017

The VSO annual field trip to Virginia Beach will be held Friday, December 1 through Sunday, December 3, 2017. On Saturday, a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) is planned. As Islands 1 & 2 will be closed, we will be visiting Islands 3 & 4. The last trip of the weekend will be a tram ride at Back Bay NWR and False Cape State Park on Sunday morning. For additions to the schedule & updates, please check VSO’s website: www.virginiabirds.org/

LODGING:
There will be a blocks of rooms available at Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563) To register for the group rate you must mention the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Reserve rooms by Nov 16 for the group rate.
Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563) 2321 Atlantic Avenue Virginia Beach, VA 23451(757) 491-2400/ FAX (757) 491-8204 $74 + tax. Reserve by November 16.
http://www.comfortsuites.com/hotel-virginia_beach-virginia-VA563

FRIDAY MORNING/FRIDAY AFTERNOON
A Friday morning trip to Craney Island has been approved by the Army Corps of Engineers. Additional details on the website as they become available.

FRIDAY EVENING
A tally/meet & greet will be held at 7:00 PM Friday at the hospitality room of the hotel. Please bring a beverage of your choice and a nibble to share.

SATURDAY MORNING
The Saturday field trip to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) will leave promptly at 8:00 AM from the parking lot of the South CBBT Toll Booth Plaza. Participants must meet & check in with Lee Adams at the CBBT parking lot at 7:25 AM. This is usually a 3 hour 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 Friday morning. The security information form, available at: http://www.cbbt.com/forms/2011RevisedRESEARCHERBirdingApp.pdf is needed by Nov 20 for each person who registers for the trip. Please fill out ONLY page two which is headed: Each individual in this Group must provide the following information & fax (540-834-0767), email, or mail to me, Lee Adams Box 1671 Fredericksburg, VA 22402. I will fill out the group information that is requested. I must take the forms to the CBBT office on Friday, 11/24.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON
Some folks may want to head north across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to explore and bird. Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge is a great winter birding area. Flocks of Snow Geese should be there. Kiptopeke State Park 3540 Kiptopeke Dr, Cape Charles, VA 23310 is another great place to bird.
If you wish to explore on your own, the address for Pleasure 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 6 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.
At 8:00 PM there will be a tally in the hospitality/meeting room. Folks can gather to chat. BYOB.

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 and end about 12:30 PM. Participants should bring binoculars, 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 27 to register. Please bring $15 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 at leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com. 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.
- Lee Adams

The VSO Extends a Warm Welcome to Our Newest Members
Sheila Corcoran, Midlothian, VA  Jill Flynn, Suffolk, VA
Julian Dymacek, Farmville, VA  Susie Engle, Tabb, VA
Nena Morgan, Lynchburg, VA  Julie Snyder, Virginia Beach, VA
Richard Wood, Waynesboro, VA  Emily Seawell, Amherst, VA
Gayle Erwin, Charlottesville, VA
Garrett Rhyne, Blacksburg, VA
Seth Honig, Fairfax, VA
Robbe Sisson, Lynchburg, VA
Call for Applications

**J. J. Murray Research Award** — *Deadline 29 January 2018*

This annual $1000 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 meaningful 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 no more than five pages in length (including citations) and provide the following information: background, objectives/hypotheses, methods, expected results and benefits to VA birds, and a budget. Submissions will be evaluated by the VSO and must be received by 29 January 2018. If the research is part of a degree program, students should include the name of the institution and department they are enrolled in, the 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 early April 2018.

Please send proposals or requests for information to:

Lesley Bulluck  
lpbulluck@vcu.edu  
804-828-0072  
Department of Biology & Center for Environmental Studies  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Trani Life Sciences Building  
1000 West Cary Street  
Richmond, VA 23284

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**Soliciting Nominations for the James Eike Service Award**

- *Deadline February 1, 2018*

In 1983, the Virginia Society of Ornithology Board of Directors approved the James Eike Service Award, to honor James Eike who was a Virginia Society of Ornithology member from 1933 until his death in 1983. Jim’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. This 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. The award recipient will be recognized at the 2018 VSO Annual Meeting 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.

Nominators should send a letter of nomination giving the rationale behind the nomination to Bill Williams  
billwilliams154@gmail.com  by February 1, 2018. In addition, two letters of support are required. The committee will review all nomination packets and make its recommendation to the VSO Board at its Spring 2017 meeting.

A list of James Eike Service Award honorees may be found on the VSO website.
VSO New River Valley Field Trip Report, June 9-11, 2017

Mother Nature delivered beautiful weather and an abundance of birds for the 55 participants in the VSO’s field trip to the New River Valley on June 9-11. Many thanks to Bill Akers and Jerry Via, who led the trips and put in many hours in advance checking out the field trip areas to make sure the birds would make an appearance when we arrived. And appear they did, with 103 species (including 18 warbler species) tallied for the three days.

We appreciated the donuts and water they provided for us on Saturday, as well as the assistance from several members of the New River Valley Bird Club: Anna Altizer, John Ford, Hailey Olsen-Hodges, Don Mackler, Bill Opengari, and Pat Polentz.

Friday afternoon the entire group traveled to the Biological Station at Mountain Lake and areas around the Lodge. On the way up the mountain on Route 700, we stopped at a magnificent overlook, where we enjoyed scenic views as well as great looks at Chestnut-sided Warbler and Scarlet Tanager. A Red-tailed Hawk glided by, and we had the unique opportunity to observe it from above AND below. Some lucky folks got glimpses of a Golden-winged Warbler.

In our walk around the Biological Station, we found Blue-headed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, Least Flycatcher, Cedar Waxwing, American Redstart, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Dark-eyed Junco. At Mountain Lake we heard a Canada Warbler and Wood Thrush songs and saw Black-throated Blue Warbler, Veery and Hairy Woodpecker.

On Saturday we visited Glen Alton and Kelly Flats in Giles County. We divided into three groups and then came back together in the parking lot for lunch. Upon arrival, we heard the vigorous song of a Chestnut-sided Warbler that continued singing throughout the morning. Among the highlights: Blackburnian Warbler, nesting Brown Creeper, Northern Flicker feeding young, Scarlet Tanager, Cedar Waxwing and Baltimore Oriole. At Kelly Flats we found both Hermit Thrush and Wood Thrush. A few observed a Louisiana Waterthrush bathing in a puddle on the side of the road.

After lunch Bill Opengari led a group to River Bend near Pearisburg to explore a beautiful area along the New River where they added a Double-crested Cormorant to our list. Others accompanied Bill Akers and Jerry Via to a road off Route 460 where Hooded Warbler and Kentucky Warbler were found.

On Sunday we visited two spots near the host hotel in Blacksburg. At Blacksburg High School, we scored four species that were previously hard to find in the area: Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrow, Blue Grosbeak, and Willow Flycatcher. We then traveled to Deerfield Trail just a few miles away and tallied 49 species, including Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Yellow Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird, and a Cedar Waxwing.

Thanks to all who attended and enjoyed this special weekend. The complete list of species seen or heard is shown below.

- Meredith Bell

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Wild Turkey
Double-crested Cormorant
Green Heron
Black Vulture
Turkey Vulture
Bald Eagle
Cooper’s Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Killdeer
Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Eastern Whip-poor-will
Chimney Swift
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
Pileated Woodpecker
American Kestrel
Eastern Wood-Pewee
Acadian Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Least Flycatcher
Eastern Phoebe
Great Crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Common Raven
Tree Swallow
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Barn Swallow
Carolina Chickadee
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
Red-breasted Nuthatch
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
House Wren
Carolina Wren
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
Veery
Hermit Thrush
Wood Thrush
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Ovenbird
Worm-eating Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush
Golden-winged Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
Kentucky Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
American Redstart
Northern Parula
Blackburnian Warbler
Yellow Warbler
Chesnut-sided Warbler
Black-throated Blue Warbler
Pine Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Prairie Warbler
Canada Warbler
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Field Sparrow
Savannah Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Dark-eyed Junco
Scarlet Tanager
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Orchard Oriole
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow
The August 18, 2017 Virginia Society of Ornithology field trip to Craney Island in Portsmouth, VA was attended by hardy, enthusiastic folks. The day dawned cool, but heated up quickly. When we saw Shannon Reinheimer, our liaison with the Army Corps of Engineers and the Craney Island site guide, decked out in a mosquito jacket with full face netting, we knew we were facing a challenge. The breeze that grew as the morning dwindled was the saving grace, and with great birds seen, made the trip its usual success.

Starting out along the low perimeter road beside the river we saw Osprey, Mallards and Black Ducks. When we came to a swiftly running channel between several rock jetties there was a motherload of Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Willets, Yellowlegs, Least Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers and a single Glossy Ibis. A most interesting observation was of several rays, perhaps Cownose, winging along the channel in search of prey.

A little farther down the road we watched Semi-palmated Plovers and Semi-palmated Sandpipers, one Short-billed Dowitcher, several Sanderling and some Western Sandpipers. Up on the dike between several impoundments we had views of Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, Stilt Sandpipers and some Wilson’s Phalaropes. Ruddy Ducks and Northern Shovelers were added to the waterfowl. There was much debate about another group of distant phalaropes. A huge truck moving dirt stirred up a Common Nighthawk that some were able to see.

The morning flew by. It was great to see old friends and meet new folks who had signed up for Virginia Society of Ornithology membership to be able to come on the field trip.

Thanks go out to the Army Corps of Engineers for allowing us to visit the site. Craney Island is a valuable site for breeding birds as well as for birds stopping over during migration.

- Lee Adams

Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award
A Call For Nominations

The Virginia Society of Ornithology is seeking nominations for the Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award, given for outstanding work in conserving Virginia’s birds and/or the state’s natural areas.

The Conservation Award was renamed the Jackson M. Abbott Conservation Award in 1989 based on Abbott’s extensive efforts to conserve Virginia’s birds. While Abbott began the Fort Belvoir Christmas Bird Count in 1941 and the 250-acre Jackson Abbott Wetland Refuge on Fort Belvoir is named after him, he is best known for his work to protect Bald Eagles in Virginia, especially in the upper reaches of the Chesapeake Bay. Some previous recipients of the award include James W. Waggener for his efforts to establish the Occoquan Wildlife Refuge (1999), the Non-game Division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for their work in promoting conservation and public awareness of birds (2002), and the Center for Conservation Biology (2007). - Patti Reum

VA Breeding Bird Atlas Fall 2017 Update
- Ashley Peele

As we pass from summer and into autumn, it is difficult to believe that the second breeding season for the VA Breeding Bird Atlas project (VABBA2) is over. Difficult, that is, until we review the tremendous volume of breeding data collected by Atlas volunteers. In the 2017 field season, nearly 25,000 eBird checklists were submitted (compare with 12,000 in 2016), bringing us to over 38,000 total checklists. The number of Atlas volunteers who contributed data to the Atlas eBird portal jumped from 430 to nearly 750. These dedicated folks logged over 24,000 hours of survey effort statewide, since the project launched in March 2016.

A citizen science project is only as successful as it’s volunteers are committed, so we wish to extend our sincere thanks to the VSO members who have contributed precious time and energy to this project. If you have not yet contributed, it is not too late! The project has three years left to collect breeding bird data and despite the incredible effort thus far, there is still a lot of ground to cover. We have published a detailed summary of VABBA2 results this Fall through project (www.vabba2.org, http://ebird.org/atlasva) and VSO webpages. Please stay tuned for new and updated Atlas volunteer opportunities in Spring of 2018!
VSO Members enjoying Craney Island August 18, 2017 — Photo by Lee Adams

Piney Grove Preserve May 27, 2017 — Photo by Lee Adams
NOW is the time to renew your VSO membership for 2018!

Use the membership renewal form in this newsletter or renew online (safely and easily with your debit or credit card) at the VSO website: www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate/

Those who renew at the $60 level by December 31, 2017, can elect to receive a VSO cap or VSO t-shirt at no extra fee. VSO Membership Secretary, Shirley Devan, will contact you when you renew to determine your preference.

Your VSO membership runs from January to December each calendar year so we will be sending out renewals by snail mail and Constant Contact in October and November. Follow up notices will be sent in early 2017 to those who have delayed renewing. Save wear and tear on your “volunteer” Membership Secretary by renewing now.

The VSO is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, so your 2018 membership dues and any donations to the Second Breeding Bird Atlas, VSO Conservation Fund, or American Kestrel Nest Box Project are tax deductible in 2017 if you renew before January 1.

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

PS: Many thanks to those who have already renewed their membership for 2018! Your dues and donations are so important to VSO’s ongoing conservation, research, and education efforts.
2018 VSO Membership Renewal

Name & Address:  

Email address:  

___ Check here if you wish to receive VSO publications electronically by email via Constant Contact. Print your email address clearly. (Note that we do not share members’ email addresses with any other organizations. The VSO may contact you by email to notify you of upcoming events, field trips, annual meetings, and organization news. You may opt out of these email notices at any time.)

New Renewing Gift

___ Contributing Membership $60 [*renew at this level by 12/31/17 & receive a VSO cap or t-shirt at no extra fee]
___ Sustaining Membership $35
___ Family Membership $25
___ Active Membership $20
___ Student Membership $10
___ Life Membership (individual) $500

I would like to make a donation to:
$ ___ Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 project
$ ___ American Kestrel Nest Box Project
$ ___ VSO Conservation Fund
$ ___ VSO General Fund
$ ___ VSO Endowment Fund
$ ___ J. J. Murray Student Research Grant Award

VSO Merchandise
___ Virginia's Birdlife “Gold Book” (Rottenborn, Brinkley 2007) $20.00
___ VSO Arm Patch $4.00
___ VSO Cloisonné Pin $5.00
___ VSO Field Checklist – FREE! Download the latest 2016 list at:
http://www.virginiabirds.org/publications/field-checklist/

Please return this form with your check, payable to the VSO, to:
Virginia Society of Ornithology, PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188

If you have questions about your membership, contact Membership Secretary Shirley Devan at: vsomembership@cox.net
Your support means so much to the success of the VSO. Thank you!

[The Virginia Society of Ornithology is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and all membership fees, donations, and contributions are tax deductible.]

* Membership Secretary Shirley Devan will contact you when you renew to determine your preference.