



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

**Hampton Roads Bird Club**

[www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org](http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org)

Vol. 59, No. 3

January / February 2011

## January 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting—7:00 PM

### "Owls - Birds of Mystery and Majesty"

Dr John Spahr comes to us from Staunton, VA and is a past President of the VSO and an accomplished birder. His presentation to us is entitled "Owls - Birds of Mystery and Majesty" and will cover some of the unique aspects of owls and their lifestyles. His talk will be both informative and very entertaining.

**Host/Hostess:** Ben & Mary Copeland

## February 10<sup>th</sup>, Meeting—6:00 PM

### "The Birds of Trinidad & Tobago"

Randy Thrasher is a VSO life member and is passionate about capturing birds and animals on video. He will present a video of the birds of Trinidad and Tobago with calypso music in the background. Randy and his wife Sue (the VSO Treasurer) reside in Lynchburg, VA.

**Host/Hostess:** Janice Little

## January Field Trips

**January 2 & 16, Sunday ~ 7:00-9:00 AM**

**Regular bird walk in Newport News Park**

Meet at Ranger Station parking lot.

Trip Leader: Jane Frigo, 873-0721

**Jan. 15 (Sat.), 7:45 AM – Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands**

On January 15, those signed up and paid will meet at the South Plaza of the CBBT. Please be there by 7:45 AM, so that carpools can be arranged and security papers checked. We have 2 groups this year, and we will be visiting Islands 2, 3 & 4. After visiting all 3 islands, those interested in going on to the Eastern Shore may do so. If carpooling, be sure all riders are in agreement as to extending the trip or returning to the South Plaza. Dress warmly, as the weather is always colder in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay. For any last minute questions, call Dave Youker at 344-9385.

**Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> (Sat.)—Backyard birding**

Rain or shine, we are off to see our backyard birds thru the windows of our homes. We will meet at the home of Paul and Phyllis Roth, 143 Breezy Point Drive, Yorktown, at 8:00 am. Bird over coffee/tea until 9:00-9:30, then move through the neighborhood and arrive at the second home (Angela Herring, 11 Diggs Drive, Newport News) by 10:00 10:30. We will leave the second home by 11:30 am or 12:00 pm. If you wish to bring a treat to share for breakfast, or a lunch for yourself to the second home, please do so.

## February Field Trips

**February 6 & 20, Sunday ~ 7:00-9:00 AM**

**Regular bird walk in Newport News Park**

Meet at Ranger Station parking lot.

Trip Leader: Jane Frigo, 873-0721

**Feb. 19 (Sat.), 8:00 AM – Mathews County**

Mathews County provides many excellent spots for viewing waterfowl and shorebirds. To carpool, meet at 7:00 AM behind the Citgo Gas Station at Patriot Square at the intersection of Rt. 17 and Ft. Eustis Blvd. Take Rt. 17 to Gloucester Courthouse and turn right at the light on Main St (17 Business). Take Main St to the first light and turn right on Rt. 14. Stay on Rt. 14 until you reach Rt. 198, and then turn right. Go less than a mile and turn left into the recreation center parking lot, adjacent to the high school (driving time about 50 minutes). Bring lunch, beverages and snacks. Sign up at the monthly meeting or call Dave Youker at 344-9385 to let him know you are coming.

**Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> (Sat.)—Backyard birding**

For the February edition, we will begin at the home of Tom and Gail Claydon (437 Woodbrook Run Newport News), at 8:00 am. Clyde and Nan LaRue will be our second home this day (19 Hertzler Rd, Newport News).

Please call Phyllis (898-7354) or sign up at the meeting so we do not miss you.

## The President's Perch

*Marilyn White*

Here we are in a Virginia Winter Wonderland! Who would have predicted 15 inches of snow to fall on Christmas Day?

I know our birds were preparing for something significant several days before Christmas as there was a feeding frenzy in our backyard. And now they are busy searching for food since the ground is covered with snow. Having said that - it is truly beautiful out across the fields and the woods, isn't it?

I hope all of you enjoyed a wonderful holiday and are looking forward to a bright New Year. We have some wonderful plans for you and we hope to see you at the January and February meeting when we will delight you with two very entertaining speakers. Winter will offer some great opportunities for field trips as our winter visitors will be arriving.

Be sure to keep plenty of winter foods out for our feathered friends - suet is very important for them in the cold weather.

Wishing you all the beginnings of a happy and healthy New Year with lots of good birding!

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## Northern Gannet

*By Mary Copeland*

We love to see the beautiful, snowy white Northern Gannets diving for fish when we visit the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge tunnels. It's hard to believe that with a wingspan of 72 in. and length of 37 in., they can dive from up to 90 ft. in the air to the ocean waters to fish. Watch for the big splash! They have a golden wash on the head and are white with black primaries and primary coverts. The Northern Gannet nests on cliffs in large colonies called ganneries in maritime Canada. They winter mostly off the Mid-Atlantic States, often well out to sea. Gannets mate for life and return each year to the same small nest site, adding a layer of seaweed and grass before laying their eggs. As in other boobies, adults feed their young regurgitated fish. Be sure to watch the sky for this beautiful bird. Also, watch the water around the island rocks for Eiders, Scoters, and the Harlequin Duck. These are all favorites, along with the Long-tailed Duck and Brant. Study up on all the winter ducks for our January 15<sup>th</sup> trip to the islands.

## VSO Winter Field Trip North Carolina Outer Banks

**February 11-13, 2010**

**Leaders: Bill Akers & Jerry Via**

The Outer Banks of North Carolina always holds surprises for participants of the VSO's winter field trip. Back by popular demand is an optional Friday pelagic trip out of Hatteras and a Sunday visit to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge.

**Lodging:** The Comfort Inn at Kill Devil Hills will be the trip headquarters. The special VSO room rate is \$65 for oceanfront and \$60 for street side plus tax (currently 12%). Ocean front rooms are available on a first come, first served basis. Contact information for the hotel is: 1601 S. Virginia Dare Trail, P.O. Box 308, Kill Devil Hills, NC 27949; Phone: 252-441-6333; fax 252-441-7779. Reservations must be made by January 14 to get the special VSO rate.

**Meals** are on your own. A complimentary breakfast buffet is now included with your stay, beginning each morning at 6:30 AM. You can select from coffee, juice, fruit, cereal, Danish, hard-boiled eggs, and make-your-own waffles. Participants should bring lunch provisions for Saturday. For dinner there are many fine restaurants in the area.

**Program:** A program of events and announcements will be available at the front desk on Friday morning.

**Friday:** Optional Pelagic Trip with Brian Patteson. This is NOT an exclusive trip for VSO, so make your reservations early to ensure a spot.

**Friday Night:** An evening orientation and slide program will be presented at 8:30 PM in the conference room near the lobby.

**Saturday:** All day will be spent visiting the impoundments of Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge and the beaches of Cape Hatteras National Seashore. The generally milder climate and the proximity of the Gulf Stream make for an interesting combination of wintering waterfowl, shorebirds, ocean birds and sometimes whales. Participants may be divided into smaller groups, but every group will visit all areas. Participants should bring lunch.

**Saturday Evening:** There will be a tally at 6:00 PM in the VSO conference room at the hotel.

**Sunday Morning:** We'll travel in caravan to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. The trip will depart from the hotel at 8:00 AM, giving those wishing to continue straight home from the field trip time to check out of their rooms.

Come prepared for variable weather, lots of birds and a good time. If you have any questions, contact Bill Akers at 540-951-7692 or bill.akersj@comcast.net or Meredith Bell at 804-824-4958 or merandlee@cox.net.

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## Harry Carlson

*By Mary Copeland*

We are sorry to learn Harry will be retiring this summer to NC to be near his daughter and family. He has been a member of our Hampton Roads Bird Club, along with his wife Dot, for many, many years. Dot is now deceased. She worked with Dot Silsby, Dorothy Mitchell, along with many others to help get the Bluebird trails started.

The Eastern Bluebird was on the decline in the 1960's, and bird-lovers were helping to quickly change this. In 1972 Myriam P. Moore invited Dot Mitchell and Dot Silsby to see the Lynchburg-Roanoke Bluebird Nesting-box Trail. This ran along a country highway between the two cities. They were so impressed they came back to start the hard work in Newport News City Park and Golf Course. Thus, in the 1970's Hampton Roads Bird Club members were helping to establish trails in Virginia as well as GA, NC and SC.

Harry has been working hard making Bluebird boxes, as well as doing everything else that needed doing; for many people. He has worked faithfully at Newport News City Park helping Dot Silsby keep records of the bluebirds, their egg numbers and hatchings, as well as fledglings. This is more fun than most people know, keeping records for around 5 months. Libby Carmines, our club Secretary, started helping them last year.

We are proud to know Harry and to have him in our club. He has made wonderful carvings of birds and given them to friends and club members. He has done so much and more than anyone realizes. He also loves to take great pictures of birds and members during our field trips. Many are shown on our website. He and Dot Silsby work together on these photo projects and have provided our club with programs on the Bluebirds & the trail, as well as sending or giving other clubs CD's of their project. He makes such great Power Point presentations which show the progression of the Bluebirds from Spring thru August.

We wish Harry many happy birding trails and chances for photography while in NC. We also hope to plan a field trip to visit his area and have him show us where he birds.

Many thanks, Harry..... We think you're the best and we wish you much happiness.

Mary Copeland & HRBC members.

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## Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

The GBBC is a FREE annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent.

**This year's count is FEB. 18-21.** Make plans to participate because your entry counts! You can get more details on their website: [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc)

### 2011 Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz

This year the blitz will be held from January 29th to February 13th. More information can be found at: <http://www.vabci.org/rusty-blackbird.asp>

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## Bob Ake's Big Year

### *Update*

Bob Ake finished off his Big Year with 731 species. Notable species at the close include the Black-vented Oriole and the Rufous-backed Thrush. He was also present for a new North American record—the Blyth's Reed-Warbler. Please visit <http://bobsbirds.blogspot.com/> for more information.

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## Field Trip Reports

### *By Dave Youker*

**Craney Island Field Trip Report.** On Sat 13 Nov, the Hampton Roads Bird Club visited Craney Island. The breeze allowed the Northern Harriers, which were numerous, to slowly hunt just above the vegetation and provide great viewing opportunities. Small watering areas along the road provided great viewing of Least and Western Sandpipers along with Dunlin. These shore birds appeared unconcerned with our presence and allowed viewing as close as 3 feet. The most prevalent waterfowl was Northern Shoveler with 200+ concentrated in one of the impoundment areas. The most common sparrow of the day was Savannah. Just under 50 species were tallied for the morning.

**Hog Island Field Trip Report.** On 14 Nov, the Hampton Roads Bird Club held a second field trip for the month to Hog Island WMA. The most unexpected bird was a single Pectoral Sandpiper. Other shorebirds included a Western Sandpiper, Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, and 15+ Greater Yellowlegs. Waterfowl species included Canada Geese, Mallard, Am. Black Duck, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Am. Wigeon, Gadwall, Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, and Ring-necked Duck. Sparrows included mostly Song and Swamp Sparrows with a couple each of Chipping and Savannah.

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To join the Hampton Roads Bird Club, please fill out the form below and bring it along with your check (payable to Hampton Roads Bird Club) to the next meeting or mail to: **Richard Hudgins, 803 Riverside Drive, Newport News, VA 23606-3629.**

Membership is from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.**

NOTE: Membership dues can also be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in the Hidenwood Shopping Center, Newport News, VA.

Meetings are held in the conference room at the Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA, on the second Thursday of the month, September through May, at 7:00 PM.

### Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (month-day): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check this box to receive newsletter via email/website instead of hard copy by mail.

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