



PROGRAM MEETING IN APRIL: On April 22nd Mr. Erwin Bohmfalk of Waynesboro, VA will be presenting a compilation of bird photographs from Southern Africa and will give everyone an idea of the bird viewing in this part of the world. He will be showing photographs that were the basis for his project that he recently sent to press in South Africa. This was a photographic field guide for the birds of the new Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site. Erwin conducts two birding safaris to South Africa every year. Please plan to join us for this wonderful presentation. It will be held in the evening at Perkins Restaurant in Winchester Virginia. Members & public welcome to meet for dinner at 6:00 pm; Program starts promptly at 7:00 pm

SHENANDOAH AUDUBON/BLANDY BLUEBIRD TRAIL 2009 SEASON REPORT

By: Kaycee Lichliter

Forty-two trained trail technicians logged a total 632 volunteer hours during the 2009 breeding season with the Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail located at the Virginia State Arboretum. Only one box on the 110-nestbox trail remained empty for the season; all other boxes had at least one nesting attempt by Bluebirds, Tree Swallows or House Wrens. The first Bluebird egg of the season was discovered on April 7 by Mr. Glenny Comer and Mr. Eric Williams.

The trail project provided its sixth year of consistently collected data to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Virginia Bluebird Society, and the USGS Bird Banding Lab. Six-year fledge totals (2004-2009) were: Bluebirds 1,066; Tree Swallows 1,232; House Wrens 1,039; and Carolina Chickadees 9. The overall nesting success for 2009 was: Bluebirds 71.6%; Tree Swallows 73.1%; House Wrens 73.4%. A total 1,117 Bluebirds nestlings have been USGS banded since 2001; 447 of which had color bands applied.

The Virginia Wildlife Magazine published the article and photos of Ms. Marie Majarov (local photographer, writer and trail tech) entitled, "Saving Virginia's Bluebirds," in the May 2009 issue. The article featured the SA/Blandy and Greg Baruffi/Timber Ridge Bluebird Trails.

Ms. Diane Greco, trail tech, and her three-year-old grandson, Eli Fuqua, were featured in a Northern Virginia Daily article written by Ms. Josette Keelor. The August 7, 2009 story highlighted their work with the trail project and attracting birds to your backyard by providing a nest box.

Ms. Kaycee Lichliter and Mr. Glenny Comer presented, "The Blandy Blues" as part of the Blandy Summer Public Program Series. Ms. Lichliter and Mr. Comer also provided training to the staff and boys at Timber Ridge School for operations on the Greg Baruffi Bluebird Trail located on the school premises.

The 2009 season wrap-up was held in October with a potluck dinner. Ms. Stephanie Fry decorated the Blandy library to create a wonderful atmosphere for the evening. Ms. Marie Majarov gave her presentation, "Bluebirds, Blandy and More." Mr. Edward Crismond shared his guitar and singing talents. The group called three Screech Owls in the nearby conifers.

I would like to extend a big **THANK YOU** to all the trail participants and to those who support us. Working together is what makes the trail project a successful conservation project. If you are interested in participating with the Shenandoah Audubon/Blandy Bluebird Trail, please contact Kaycee Lichliter, Trail Manager, at kayceelichliter@hotmail.com or call Blandy Experimental Farm at 837-1758. Our workshops begin in March for the 2010 season and registration is required.

President's Message - March 2010

Hello Members, Friends and Gracious Donors,

For those of you who don't know me, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Diane Greco (formerly Sours), and I have been involved with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society (NSVAS), or Shenandoah Audubon, or whatever you want to call it for about ten years now. Over these many years, I have volunteered for many bird watches and counts, bird banding projects, the Blandy Bluebird Trail at the VA State Arboretum, and other Audubon projects and events, both on a local and National level. Needless to say, I have a real affinity for birds, but I also have a great love for the natural world. These natural or "wild" spaces, some gloriously beautiful and some not so beautiful but important in their own right, are unfortunately spaces that we may in our busy lives often take for granted. Many of us think our natural creatures and places will always be there for us to study and enjoy. However, in today's world of ever-expanding civilization and progress, we lose a significant portion of our wild areas, and the animals that inhabit them, every single day.

I became a member of this organization because I want to save our natural places and their wildlife, for my Grandson's generation and for many future generations. As Shenandoah Audubon's President for the next two years, I'd like to effect change for the better, both in our local community and in our local Audubon organization. To take our this group from just "going" to "growing and thriving", I believe it will take a commitment to positive communication as well as cooperation, from the NSVAS Officers, Board of Directors, and from you, the members. I am asking you to get involved if you can, because we need your help. It is our partnership with the National Audubon Society that will guide and mentor us as we go forward. It is our partnership with our community that will allow us to educate, inform and preserve. And it is the Board of Directors' partnership with the NSVAS members that allows us all to have a vehicle to project a common voice, a voice that is our Mission:

The mission of the National Audubon Society (NAS) and Shenandoah Audubon (NSVAS) is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity

It is my sincere hope you will join us as we move forward.

Best regards,

Diane Greco

NSVAS President 2010-2012

JAY-BIRD'S CORNER

By: Jay Yount, Certified Wildlife Rehabilitator

It's one of my favorite birds, and it wasn't that long ago that we called it by a different name than what we should call it today. Personally, between you and me, I still prefer the old name. It suits my favorite bird well. Easily identified by the rufous-colored feathers under each wing, it was once known as the Rufous-sided Towhee. I even like saying "Rufous-sided Towhee". Has a little rhythm to it, don't you think? The male has a dark chocolate, almost black head, neck and back. The female is a molasses brown. What makes this bird so distinct are the dark, rich, rust-colored feathers running along its sides. Above the rufous band of feathers is the contrasting black or dark brown, and below is a striking belly of white. These 3 color patterns make a beautiful bird.

Today the Rufous-sided Towhee has been divided into two separate species. The ornithologists decided to eliminate the Rufous-sided Towhee and create the Eastern Towhee and the Spotted Towhee. I am sad to say . . . purchase a recent bird guide and the Rufous-sided Towhee is no more. Here in Virginia, we have the Eastern Towhee, a stocky bird similar to the Robin, but smaller (approximately 8 inches long). Usually I hear the Towhee before ever seeing it. They have such a musical song, often described as "drink your teeeee". And they ARE LOUD! Not a quiet bird, you can easily hear their presence. Despite their vocals, however, they tend to be on the shy side. You'll find them on the ground under the brush, feet dancing back and forth as they uncover bits of food.

Our Towhee can be found north to the Great Lakes, south to Florida, and east to our coastline. The division between the Eastern and Spotted Towhee is in the west. Ornithologists have drawn a line vertically through the midsection of the United States. Towhees to the right of their line from the Dakotas down through the middle of Texas are called Eastern Towhees. Left of this line and the Towhees are Spotted. There are some subtle differences between these two species. Our Towhees have solid colored wings and a small white patch of feathers that can be seen along the base of their primaries. The Spotted Towhees have small white spots on their wings and no white patch along their primaries. Don't feel too badly if you can't remember these differences.

Regardless of their names, there's no mistaking a Towhee once you've seen one. It will be those rufous colored sides that tell you it's a Towhee. Every time I see or hear one I say "Oh, there goes a Rufous-sided Towhee". It's not unusual to be corrected by a fellow bird-watcher. "Oh no, I mean there goes an Eastern Towhee", I say. It's important to get it right. Or is it? Has anyone told the Towhees about their new name? Have they been informed of the line dividing the United States in half? Those ornithologists had better tell all the Towhees, because I've been hearing some gossip among the birds lately. The Eastern Towhees have been moving out west. Those renegades are crossing over the line and are breeding with the Spotted Towhees! And those Spotted Towhees - they're heading east and setting up homes here. I can see where this is leading. It won't be too long and those ornithologists will have to identify another Towhee Species. When the white spots start showing up on the wings of our Eastern Towhees, a name will have to be created for this new species. The same can be said when the white patch appears on the Spotted Towhees out west. If I may - I'd like to make a suggestion. Yes, you guessed it! Let's call this new species the Rufous-sided Towhee. What do you think? It has a nice, familiar ring to it. Rufous-sided Towhee. A beautiful name for a most beautiful bird.

Top of the Food Chain

By: Charlie Hagan

I've been refilling the Sam Patten memorial feeder station at Blandy Farm mostly in the evenings, after work. The past couple of times that I've gone out to the Arboretum, I first have to walk Kukla, my little Cattle Dog. As we swing down toward the Pavilion, I've noticed a pair of Red Tailed Hawks (an adult and an immature hawk) soaring through the dusk up toward the feeder station. They roost in the tall hemlocks right over the station and apparently spend the night there.

So, in the morning, the wildlife that's attracted to the feeders must be completely oblivious to the pair of hawks quietly perched above them. The feeders have taken a lot of rodent damage from the deer and squirrels out there, but the peanut feeder from Wild Birds Unlimited has so far proven indestructible. I'm a little ambivalent about the idea of a squirrel's "last shadow" being the Red Tail mother bearing down upon him right as he gets his peanut, but I guess that in the scheme of things, we are still feeding the birds - just in a new and novel way. One more lesson from Nature: *There's no Free Breakfast!*

The American Robin (*Turdus Migratorius*)



By: Sharon Dodrill

To me, it just wouldn't seem like Spring without seeing the American Robin. Although complete migrators in northern states, the robin is a year-round resident in Virginia. They can be heard singing all night long in the spring. The way to tell the male apart from the female is the male's head and tail is nearly all black, whereas the female's head has more gray on it and her chest is a duller orange. They have impressive worm-hunting skills and they are definitely one of America's favorite backyard birds. They are common sights on lawns across North America, where you often see them tugging earthworms out of the ground. Robins are popular birds for their warm orange breast, cheery songs, and their early appearance at the end of winter. They eat large numbers of both invertebrates and fruit. Particularly in spring and summer, they eat large numbers of insects and some snails along

with earthworms. They also eat an enormous variety of fruits, including chokecherries, hawthorn, dogwood, juniper berries and sumac fruits.

When foraging on the ground, the Robin runs a few steps then stops abruptly. They often find worms by staring, motionless at the ground with their head cocked to one side. It looks as if the bird is intently listening, but scientists believe the birds find worms by sight, watching for signs of digging. Robins often fight over worms that others have caught. When pairs are forming in spring, you may see a display in which a male and female approach each other holding their bills wide open and touching them. Females build the nest from the inside out and can produce three successful broods in one year. On average, though, only 40% of nests successfully produce young and only 25% of those fledged young survive to November. The nests are built by pressing dead grass and twigs into a cup shape using the wrist of one wing. Other materials include paper, feathers, rootlets, or moss in addition to the grass and twigs. Once the cup is formed, she reinforces the nest using soft mud gathered from worm castings to make a heavy, sturdy nest. She then will usually line the nest with fine dry grass. After the pale blue eggs hatch, (usually 4-7 eggs), both female and male robins feed their young. Over the years, I have had many robins' nests in my yard, and they can build nests in the strangest places! Last year, there was a nest built on my stepladder that was resting up against the back of the house. Of course, every time I went outside I had to pass by that stepladder and the mother bird would fly out of the nest. I didn't want to move the ladder because I was afraid it would disrupt the babies, so we both tolerated each other for a month until the babies left the nest. Hopefully she will choose a better nesting site this spring and I will definitely move that ladder!

Members, where are you?!

Audubon needs your attendance at our public meetings! Past Program Chair Roxie Leonard has lined up a great year for 2010. We have interesting and informative speakers to present information to YOU, our members. Please join us, and let us know if you have any suggestions for future programs you would like us to have. We'll hopefully see you soon!

Another Wonderful Birding Festival

By: Judy Hagan

Our 9th Annual Birding Festival was in November of last year. The Luray Zoo brought a Snowy Owl for all of the Harry Potter fans to see. They also brought the fastest American bird, the Peregrine Falcon and the world's largest owl, the Eagle Owl. The crowds loved all three. The Luray Zoo also has two Andean Condors that you might want to go and see when they open their doors this spring.

This year, we had a lot of youth enter our art contest. The three judges, Charlie Thorne, Mary Ann Vaughn and Mary Fetter, enjoyed seeing all the talent that the entries demonstrated. The winners ranged in age from 4 to 16! The grand prize winner won \$100 and the others won age appropriate bird guides. (The 4 year old won second place in the younger elementary level.)

The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were again able to earn merit badges. Fifty children nailed together wren houses that they were able to take home. Our own Barbara Chaplin did a wonderful presentation about nests created by different birds (and even one that had been used by an owl, a squirrel and a hawk; thank goodness not at the same time!)

We had lots of people interested in our bird walks. The group that when to the Burwell property got a bird's eye view of a vulture that had been cared for at the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center and later released. He landed on the ground at the feet of one individual and tried to untie the man's shoelaces. He also enjoyed perching on a camera tripod, which of course made taking his picture difficult! You never know what you will see on a bird walk!

Our next festival will Nov. 6th this year. I am looking for volunteers to help in planning the festival. This will be my tenth festival and I would like to move on to other projects. I appreciate all the people who volunteer on festival day. It would not happen without you. However, I also need more help in the planning stages. I would also like to know of new activities you might want to include in the festival for 2010!

FROM NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

Tell Senators Webb and Warner to Pass a Bill!!

by *Glenda C. Booth* (gbooth123@aol.com; 703-765-5233)

The next six weeks are critical for passing a climate change bill. If the Senate does not act soon, action could be delayed for a long time. Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner are "swing" votes. Senator Warner has said he is hearing more from "the other side" than from conservationists. We need to intensify our contacts. **The National Audubon Society has made climate change legislation its highest priority in the current U.S. Congress. Please write them today.** Here are some points you could make.

A strong bill should include these elements:

- Reduce total US global warming pollution by at least 80% by 2050 by cutting emissions from carbon-based fuels like coal and oil;
- Move to clean electricity through use of more renewable fuels;
- Strengthen energy efficiency; Virginia can cut electricity use by 19% through steps like tougher building codes, says the American Council on an Energy Efficient Economy;
- Create new, clean energy jobs. A University of Massachusetts analysis concluded a low-carbon economy could create 56,000 new clean energy jobs in Virginia.

There are serious costs of inaction from infrastructure damage caused by more intense weather events to providing health services to address more disease.

How to contact Virginia's U.S. Senators:

The Honorable James Webb (<http://webb.senate.gov/>), U. S. Senate, Washington, D. C. 20515

The Honorable Mark Warner (http://warner.senate.gov), U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20515

You can also send an email at your senator's web site or through Audubon's Action Center, www.audubonaction.org.

For fact sheets on global warming, visit <http://www.audubon.org/globalWarming/GetTheFacts.php>.

Shenandoah Audubon
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Bird Counts	Calmes Neck Area / Margaret Wester - 540-837-2799 Shenandoah Area / Rob & Ann Simpson - 540-869-2150
Birding Festival	Judy Hagan - 540-667-6778
- Basic Bird Study Workshop	Charlie Hagan - 540-667-6778
- Bird Seed Sale	Lee Bowen - 540-635-2547
Bird Nest Box Construction/Sales	Charlie Clevenger - 540-869-2180
Bluebird Trail at Blandly Farm, Boyce, VA	Kaycee Lichliter, Trail Manager - kayceelichliter@hotmail.com
Bluebird Trail at Shenandoah River "Andy Guest" State Park	Roxie Leonard - 540-635-2263 / Lee Bowen - 540-635-2547
Earth Day	Judy Hagan - 540-667-6778
Hawk Watch at Snickers Gap (September)	Jim Smith - 540-667-0504
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