



AUGUSTA
BIRD
C L U B

*"Blithe wander of the wintry air, now here, now there, now everywhere.
Quick drifting to and fro, A cheerful life devoid of care, a shadow on the snow."*

~ George W. Bungay

December Meeting

Date: Monday, January 10th, 7:00 PM
Place: AMC Lifetime Building/Blue Ridge
 Community College Education Center
Program: Birds of Qatar
Speaker: Peter Nebel



Those of you that attended the March meeting last year will remember the outstanding presentation that Peter gave on the Birds of Korea. We are fortunate to have Peter back again this season. Peter was in Qatar for almost a year starting in March 2008, working as the head of the military environmental organization on Al Udeid Air Base outside Doha. His presentation will include pictures of some of birds found in Qatar and will also give a hint of what the country looks like.



Qatar is a small country that consists of a peninsular extending off of Saudi Arabia and into the Persian Gulf. As with his presentation on Korea, many of the birds we'll see will be much different from what we're used to. Little Owl, Desert Wheatear, Black-winged Kite, Isa-

belline Shrike, Hoopoe, Namaqua Dove and many more. You won't want to miss this one!

Coming Up...

Feb. 14th - John's ABA Big Year Adventures
 Mar. 14th - South Florida & Sanibel Island
 Apr. 11th - The Cycle of Birdsongs
 May - Montgomery Hall Park, Birding & Picnic

Field Trips

Saturday February 12th: Highland County
Meeting place / time: Woodrow Wilson Parkway
 Holiday Inn (exit 225 off I-81) lower parking lot,
 8:00 AM
Coordinator: Allen Lerner at larneysky@mind-spring.com or 280-3423

Join Allen Lerner on this adventure to Highland County in the hopes of finding Golden Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk, Black-capped Chickadee, and just maybe an Evening Grosbeak. Snow or rain will cancel. If you have any questions about this fantastic trip, do not hesitate to contact Allen!

January 28th to 30th : Virginia Beach Winter Wildlife Festival

Virginia Beach offers some great winter wildlife watching opportunities - the shore of the Chesapeake to the marshes, fields and forests that surround Back Bay and of course the Islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. There are great opportunities to see waterfowl, shorebirds and winter songbirds along with seals and whales.

Come to festival for a chance to visit all of the Virginia Beach hotspots. This festival is sponsored by the Virginia Beach Park & Rec Dept. with support from the Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. Registration is open and you can find more info at www.vbgov.com/winterwildlife Check out the combined Bay back/False Cape Trip, the visit to First Landing & Fort Story or the insider's trip to all of the out of the way gems tucked away in Virginia Beach. There will also be a Sunday trip to the Whitehurst and Beasley Tract.

WINGBEATS

"Winter's Impact"

The doldrums of the Northern Hemisphere are with us, cold weather and less daylight hours; although, we are now actually gaining more daylight every day. What to do? The perfect tonic to this dilemma would be warmer climes such as Central and South America.



The first thing I would do is some research via the internet where a wealth of information is available for free. To be more specific, I would suggest the following bird touring companies with whom I have had personal experience and would recommend.

FIELD GUIDES of Austin, Texas, www.fieldguides.com It has been providing birding tours for 27 years and has 58 scheduled departures in 2011 for Central and South America.

VENT (Victor Emanuel Nature Tours) of Austin, Texas, www.ventbird.com In business for 30 years, this company has 52 set departures in 2011 to Central and South America.

WINGS of Tucson, Arizona, www.wingsbirds.com Providing birding tours since 1980. It is offering 32 scheduled departures for Central and South America in 2011.

All do private tours aimed to meet your individual expectations, the needs of family, friends or organizations, just ask. Whatever trip you choose, you will have a wonderful time and depending on place and length of your trip, you could return with up to 500-600 species.

If, for some reason you cannot actually go on a trip, I suggest you do it vicariously by visiting their web sites and enjoying the abundance of excellent slide shows, trip lists and detailed itineraries. This will perhaps satisfy your need for a warmer clime.

-Walt Childs, President

2011 Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz

Jan. 29th through Feb. 13th, 2011

The Rusty Blackbird has undergone precipitous population declines over the past 40 years, with estimates in the range of 85-97 %. It breeds in boreal forested wetlands of northern New England, Alaska and the Canadian Provinces, in areas that can be remote and difficult to access. On its wintering grounds in the southeastern United States it can be relatively inconspicuous for much of the season, foraging in quiet flocks of different sizes, or mixing with larger flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, grackles and starlings, where it can go unnoticed without careful observation.



This is the third and final year of this citizen science effort implemented to help better understand the mysterious declines of this species. Virginia as a whole has had a good turnout over the past years, but we hope to expand our coverage in this last Blitz.

Participation in the Blitz is easy. As a Blitz volunteer, you will visit sites with potentially suitable Rusty Blackbird habitat and record your observations of the number of birds present, along with very basic habitat information. You are free to visit whichever sites you want, whenever you want and as often as you want during the Blitz period of January 29 – February 13. Sites can be targeted based on your knowledge of local habitat, of current occurrences or of past observations. There is a great deal of local knowledge in the collective membership of your bird club, and it is highly recommended that you coordinate with your club so that geographic coverage of suitable (and accessible) habitat is maximized. Blitz observations are submitted through Virginia eBird, so that they may be analyzed together with eBird Blitz observations from other states. If you are not already registered with eBird, this is a great opportunity to join.

For more information on Rusty Blackbirds and the Blitz, please visit the [VABCI Blitz page](#). Here you will find Virginia-specific information on Rusty Blackbirds, as well as links to the national Blitz page with additional information on the bird's ecology and habitat preferences, images of Rusty Blackbirds, song samples, Blitz protocols and instructions on entering your Blitz observations into eBird. If you have any questions about the Blitz, please contact the VA Blitz Coordinator at sergio.harding@dqjf.virginia.gov



Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program 2010 Update

During this past year, the Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program of the National Audubon Society has been busy in forwarding our mission of engaging people for bird conservation in the Commonwealth's most critical habitats for breeding, migrating and wintering birds. The following are some

exciting highlights of this past year's events and accomplishments:

- Helped to protect the 125 acre Blair's Wharf in the James River National Wildlife Refuge located within the Lower James River IBA
- Coordinated and conducted the first survey of the Central Piedmont IBA, focusing on the protected areas
- Expanded our Adopt-an-IBA Program to include eight bird conservation groups throughout Virginia
- Partnered with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to train birders from 5 Audubon Chapters and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory to identify and report *Phragmites* invasions throughout Virginia using an online conservation tool called LandScope – the valuable information collected will help DCR staff to ground-truth their own data and identify new stands of *Phragmites* to eliminate, thus preserving natural marsh habitats
- Began a partnership with the Virginia Living Museum to conduct five TogetherGreen volunteer events, thus raising awareness for Audubon and bird habitat conservation
- Worked with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to monitor coveys of Northern Bobwhite quail, a declining species of Global Conservation Concern



- With partners at Richmond Audubon Society and Virginia Commonwealth University we have initiated a project called Team Warbler, an international alliance between the research and school communities of Richmond and Panama City that will engage academic communities at the college, ele-

mentary and middle school levels. Team Warbler focuses on the breeding and wintering habitat of the Prothonotary Warbler.

From the Powell and Stone Mountains IBA in the southwest to the Barrier Island Lagoon System IBA on the Eastern Shore, Virginia's 20 IBAs all face a large variety of threats and challenges. We would thus like to extend thanks to our donors, volunteers, adoption groups and to our public, private and non-profit partners in conservation for their help and support in furthering our mutual mission for bird conservation throughout the Commonwealth. We could not do it without you and thus ask for your continued support heading into 2011. Thank you!

-David A. Bryan
Outreach Coordinator
Virginia IBA Program

Virginia Bald Eagle Population Increasing

The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary and Virginia Commonwealth University has compiled 2010 survey results for the Virginia bald eagle population. The 2010 survey checked more than 900 nests and monitored 684 occupied territories. This number represents an 11.8% increase over 2009. The number of breeding attempts increased by 10.2% and 136 new nests were mapped. Eagle territories were located within 47 counties and 10 independent cities. A total of 883 chicks were counted during the productivity flight.



This is the highest chick production recorded throughout the long history of the survey. The Virginia population continues to have tremendous reproductive momentum. Of 10,092 chicks documented in the past 34 years, 8.7% were produced in 2010 and 70.7% were produced since 2000. In

general, this momentum is the combined result of an overall increase in the breeding population, the breeding success rate and the average brood size.

For the second year, the locations of known nests from the Virginia Survey are being made available online to the public. The Center has developed a VA Eagles website (<http://www.ccb-wm.org/virginiaeagles/index.htm>) that hosts a Google application allowing users to locate documented eagle nests and to view their mapped locations on a county by county basis. The information is being made available in the hope that the public will become more actively involved in the conservation of this species throughout Virginia. Despite our best efforts, an unknown number of eagle nests go unrecorded each year. This is particularly true in the Piedmont and mountains. The Center believes that the public knows of many nests that are unknown to researchers and requests that the public view nests in their locality and report nests that are currently not included in the annual survey.

ABC Meeting Minutes 13th December 2010

The meeting convened a half hour earlier than usual at 6:30 pm on Dec.13th for the annual ABC Holiday party. Everyone enjoyed socializing, snacks and a buffet dinner. The club provided the main course meat, dinner rolls, drinks and plates, while members brought a great variety of side dishes and desserts. The tables were draped with a bright assortment of holiday linens, and set the scene for a cheerful evening. Linda Matkins presided over awarding some great door prizes, which really added to the fun! After the meal, we were treated to a variety of presentations. Emily Brett shared a holiday bird-inspired poem. Brenda Tekin and Nancy Lawler shared both wonderful photographs and stories to go along with them. New member Sandra Catchings spoke of her family's efforts to hatch quail eggs and release the birds in the wild.

Information was shared and questions answered about the upcoming Waynesboro and Augusta Co. Christmas Bird Counts. Lastly, we got an update on John Spahr and Bob Ake's progress and bird count on their "Big Year". Bob stands at 729, close to the all-time record. John is not far behind at 701.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessie Shaw, Secretary

Bird Quiz!

Can you identify the bird below?



The answer will be revealed in next month's newsletter. Happy guessing!

Last Month: Northern Pygmy Owl (*Glaucidium californicum*)

Virginia Society of Ornithology Website

virginiabirds.net

Augusta Bird Club Website

www.augustabirdclub.org

