



Northern Neck Audubon News

The Northern Neck of Virginia Chapter of the National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 991, Kilmarnock, Virginia 22482

www.northernneckaudubon.org

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American Goldfinch
Photo by Paul Service

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

June 6 - 7:00 PM

Meeting - Grace Episcopal Church
Kilmarnock, VA

"Quails in Virginia" Speaker: David
Bryan, Private Lands Biologist,
Conservation Management
Institute, USDA

June 13 - Bird Walk

8:15 AM at Beaverdam

Led by Frank Schaff (804-462-0084)

To carpool, meet at Grace Episcopal
Church at 7:15 AM.

June 18 - Bird Walk

(Watch listings in local newspapers
for time and location.)

President's Message

Attention all NNAS Members: Election of Officers and Directors

The election of Officers and Directors of the Chapter will take place at the NNAS Annual Meeting on June 6, 2011 at 7:00 PM at Grace Episcopal Church in Kilmarnock. The Officers elected will serve from June 2011 to May 2012.

A nominating committee – made up of Maggie Gerds, Jim Wagner and Paula Boundy – has spoken to members to arrive at a slate of officers for the upcoming program year, as well as two directors to fill vacancies on the NNAS board.

Below are the nominations:

For President: Paula Boundy

Vice President: Ron Feldman

Secretary: Nancy Garvey

Treasurer: Trudy Quinto

Director for term ending 2012: Brenda Knupp

Director for term ending 2013: Mike Andrews

For the term ending 2014, the following directors have agreed to serve again: Reta Stover, Gary Garrett, and Bonnie Wilson.

As per the bylaws of the Chapter, nominations for the above positions were accepted if they were submitted in writing to the Nominating Committee by any member of the Chapter by April 25.

NNAS cannot function without volunteers. Please do your part to keep NNAS going strong.

James R. Wagner, President

June Program on Quail

David Bryan is the scheduled speaker for the NNAS June meeting, and he will present a program on the status of Quail in Virginia. David received his B.S. in Environmental Studies, with a Minor in Statistics, from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2008, continuing on to earn his Master of Environmental Studies from VCU in 2010. During his college years, David worked with the Maymont Foundation in Richmond as an environmental educator, and as an intern with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, mapping natural heritage sites throughout the Commonwealth. *(continued on page 3)*

Grasshopper Sparrow Project

by Sandy Spencer

The Rappahannock River Valley NWR manages some of the largest grasslands on the Northern Neck dedicated to grassland obligate birds of conservation concern, such as the Grasshopper Sparrow. This migratory species has narrow, specific breeding habitat requirements: "short" bunch grass (< 1 meter), space between grass, with fields large enough to accommodate a small population of Sparrows (they don't breed singly). They need a large block configuration of the field in order to have enough interior acres away from trees, tall structures, and in fields located in an open, agricultural landscape. These grasslands must be maintained annually in this part of Virginia in order to provide appropriate conditions. This requires a lot of time and resources to set back succession such as burning, mowing, and controlling trees, in addition to controlling invasive plant species and promoting native grasses and forbs.

We also need to monitor the species for which all this management is taking place. Grassland bird surveys over the past few years show a strong, loyal population of Grasshopper Sparrows as well as other birds, like Field Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Eastern Kingbird, Indigo Bunting, and Common Yellowthroat. Last year territory mapping suggested as many as 74 Grasshopper Sparrows nesting at Wilna alone. But how well are the birds faring? Are snakes, foxes, raccoons, *(continued on page 4)*

Sparrow Project *(continued)*

and other species that access grasslands from the edges predated them? To answer this question, we will search for nests and monitor their fate using motion-activated wildlife cameras.

The refuge is grateful for Northern Neck Audubon Society's support of this effort by purchasing four motion-activated cameras for our project. Our new cameras will work 24 /7 monitoring our Grasshopper Sparrows.

We will monitor the nests from late June through July. So stay tuned for some interesting results! Thank you, NNAS!!

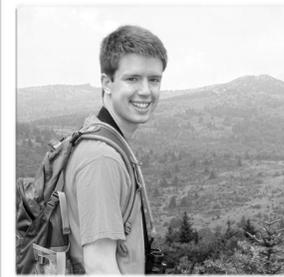


Jessica Servis, NNAS Secretary, presents Sandy Spencer with the NNAS gift of motion-activated cameras to be used to monitor Grasshopper Sparrows.

(Photo by Paul Servis).

June Program *(continued)*

Most recently, David has worked with the National Audubon Society's Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program as Outreach Coordinator. From bird surveys to outreach education to Geographic Information Systems work, he has completed a large variety of projects geared towards the identification and preservation of the most critical bird habitats in Virginia. Having worked on the Quail Action Plan from the Audubon perspective, David is excited to have joined the Quail Team as a Private Lands Biologist with the Conservation Management Institute.



Photograph of David Bryan

Past Events

Wetland Birds 'Herptiles' & Other Critters

Michael Hayslett, Naturalist-in-Residence and Director of the Virginia Vernal Pools Program at Sweet Briar College, presented a thought-provoking and enjoyable talk on habitat preservation at the April NNAS meeting. Mike has studied seasonal wetlands for three decades and is an avid birder as well.

A vernal pool is a special type of wetland that is inundated with water in the spring, but is dry at least part of the year (usually in the late summer and/or fall). Mike says, "The temporary aquatic nature of the seasonal wetland environment is part of its charm, but also part of the challenge in trying to preserve them." But they are critical habitats to preserve, because they are teeming with life and form an important part of the food chain for animals.

(continued on page 4)

Past Events (*continued*)

How can you recognize a vernal pool? If it is the season for the pool to be filled with water, you will notice that the water is crystal clear with hardly any sedimentation. When dry, buttressing of tree roots and water-staining on their trunks is a sign that they are part of a seasonal wetland. Because they are not wet throughout the year, another aspect is that they are free of fish, allowing amphibians to reproduce successfully there, because their eggs are safe from being consumed by fish.

Some people have the mistaken notion that seasonal wetlands are breeding grounds for mosquitoes, but Mike says that research shows that if the pools persist for more than three months, they actually act to eliminate mosquitoes – at least if the wetland is healthy.

Toward the end of his talk, Mike provided examples of how some specific bird species have developed an interdependent relationship with certain vernal pool plant and animal species, such as the relationship between the Barred Owl and the Spotted Salamander and between the Wood Duck and Fairy Shrimp.

The loss of these vital and beautiful habitats is a serious problem. You can learn more about them by going to the Virginia Vernal Pools web site at <http://www.virginiavernalspools.org/>.

Nesting Birds

On May 2, attendees of the NNAS monthly meeting were treated to a fascinating program on Nesting Birds. The presenter was Teta Kain, who is well known throughout the Northern Neck for her knowledge of nature, her amazing photographs, and her lively presentations. Here are just a few of the random nuggets of nesting bird information that I scribbled down during her talk:

- Chickadees like little houses, and Teta puts the houses where she can see them from above.
- Some birds will move into unclean nests, for example, House Wrens will build a nest right overtop a Chickadee nest, and Tufted Titmice will also reuse boxes of other birds.
- Cardinals often nest in privet hedges and can't resist stuffing food into any open mouth -- even if the open mouth belongs to a fish!

- Snakes and raccoons are the bane of Bluebirds; you should always use a predator guard on their houses.
 - Tree Swallows love roosting-type boxes and prefer to be near water.
 - Attracting Purple Martins to nesting boxes can be hit or miss, but Teta knows of some people who can even get Purple Martins to nest in houses made of gourds.
 - The population of Barn Swallows is declining rapidly because of the loss of habitat for those birds.
 - Great Crested Flycatchers have been known to set up housekeeping in mailboxes.
 - Screech Owls like a clean box, 10 to 15 feet from the ground, filled with wood shavings and with a clear view in three directions.
 - Doves build what looks like a flimsy nest, yet the nest seems to hold on, even in heavy winds.
 - Beware of Mockingbirds, who will attack any cat, dog, or *mailman* who dares to come near their nests.
 - Killdeer seem to look for the most inconvenient place to nest -- such as a gravel driveway!
 - Osprey are opportunists. Preferring platforms over water, they will sometimes even build on boat docks.
- There was much more that Teta shared. Don't miss her presentations whenever you have the chance to hear her speak!

New Bluebird License Plate

Press Release from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, April 1, 2011, Richmond, VA — Motorists in Virginia have a new opportunity to show how much they care about Virginia's wildlife by being one of the first to drive away with the latest in the series of Virginia Wildlife Conservationist License Plates, The Bluebird of Happiness. Not only will drivers have a chance to show everyone they care about wildlife, but they will also help increase public awareness about the importance of preserving and protecting Virginia's diverse natural resources.

After the first 1,000 Bluebird plates have been purchased, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) will receive \$15 of the \$25 additional annual fee. In 2010, the Wildlife Conservationist License Plate series generated \$369,420 for DGIF's conservation efforts. The proceeds are reinvested in wildlife management, research, educational programs, and for purchasing public lands that benefit all wildlife while assuring that outdoor opportunities such as hunting, (*continued on page 5*)

Bluebird License Plates (*continued*)

fishing, hiking, boating, and wildlife watching will be enjoyed by Virginians and by future generations.

The artwork for the new Bluebird Wildlife Conservationist License Plate was painted by nationally-renowned wildlife artist and conservationist Spike Knuth....After 29 years of service, he retired from DGIF where his paintings, writings and photography highlighted the beauty of the wildlife and nature in a multitude of publications, including Virginia Wildlife Magazine, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail guides, posters, and brochures.

DGIF Executive Director and avid birder Bob Duncan predicts "the Bluebird of Happiness—the eighth in the Wildlife Conservationist License Plate series—will be one of our best-selling plates." Since 1991, the DGIF and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) have worked hand-in-hand to develop the very popular series of wildlife license plates. The complete wildlife series includes Mallard Duck, White-Tailed Deer, Largemouth Bass, Brook Trout, Wild Turkey, Black Bear, and Bald Eagle. All are currently available through DMV offices.

The Virginia Bluebird Society, a DGIF conservation partner, was thrilled to hear of this addition to the Conservationist License Plate series. "The Bluebird is emblematic of conservation success in Virginia and this plate celebrates that success," said Anne Little, President of the Virginia Bluebird Society. To date, with the support of DGIF, the VBS has helped to fledge over 158,000 cavity nesting birds through their Bluebird Box Trails.

To learn more, visit the Wildlife Conservationist License Plate section of the DGIF website and the Virginia Bluebird Society's website. To purchase a Bluebird Wildlife Conservationist License Plate, visit DMV's website (<http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/exec/vehicle/splates/info.asp?idnm=WLCBB>). To see other wildlife conservationist license plates go to <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/plates/>.



NNAS Hotline Update

Thank you for your patience as we recently moved the Hotline to a new provider. The administrators are still learning the more esoteric commands of the new system, and some minor tweaking may yet occur, but no major disruptions are expected. To report bird sightings (hopefully Northern Neck sightings), send an email to: nnasnet@freelists.org. If you attach a picture, please reduce the size to less than 100K. If your mail system does not provide a choice for reducing picture file sizes, then email your posting and picture attachment to nnasnetadmins@freelists.org, and we will reduce the picture size and re-post your report. This process is to help those who use a dial-up system for connecting to the internet.

We welcome your comments/complaints. Send them to nnasnet-admins@freelists.org.

Tom Teeples and Tom Saunders

New Members

Please welcome these new members to our chapter. Give them a special 'Hello' when you see them at our meetings and walks.

- Richard V. Chambers
- Steven Finsterie
- Carol Hardy
- John Jennings
- Karen J. Peterson
- Katherine B. Pickle
- William & Sandra Romesburg
- Julie Thostenson
- Diane Wrick

INJURED BIRDS

Diana O' Conner - 804-313-2240

INJURED ANIMALS

Nancy Johnston - 804-435-3040



Application for Membership in NNAS - Chapter Code X50, 7XCH

- Local Chapter Only Membership - \$15.00 annually, renewable in June; includes local newsletter and directory.
- National & Local Membership - \$20.00 introductory (\$35.00 after), as above, plus glossy National Audubon Magazine.
 Make checks payable to "Audubon Society".

Name _____ Phone _____ - _____

Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



Northern Neck Audubon Society Resources

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Directors Reta Stover Gary Garrett Bonnie Wilson Nancy Millar Maggie Gerdts Trudy Quinto Glyn Surdam Ron Feldman Fred Witschey		Website www.northernneckaudubon.org Send suggestions to: bbwilson@kaballero.com Directory - publ. every 18 mths Newsletter - five issues annually submit ideas, articles etc. to: bbwilson@kaballero.com

Or Current Resident

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