



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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May/June 2014



American Goldfinch. Photo by Paul Servis

Inside This Issue

Election of Officers & Directors	2
Results of Rusty Blackbird Blitz	2
Ducks Don't Bake	3
Bird's Eye View from Across the Pond	4
NNAS Approves Grants	4-5
Past Events	5-6
Upcoming Events	6-7
Members News	7

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

April 26 - Bird Walk, 8:30 AM

Baylor Park, Kilmarnock

Led by Frank Schaff. Call for details:
804-462-0084

May 5 - 7:00 PM

Meeting - Grace Church, Kilmarnock

Speaker: Adolph White

Topic: Purple Martins

May 12 - Bird Walk, 8:30 AM

Newport News Park

Led by Frank Schaff. Call for details:
804-462-0084

May 24 - Bird Walk, 8:30 AM

Hutchinson Tract, Rappahannock River
Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Led by Frank Schaff. Call for details:
804-462-0084

June 2 - 7:00 PM

Meeting - Grace Church, Kilmarnock

Speaker: Larry Brindza

Topic: Monarch Migration

Election of Officers & Directors

The Northern Neck Audubon Chapter's program year runs from June through the following May, so it is time to elect officers and directors for the 2014 - 2015 term. The election will take place at the June 2, 2014, NNAS meeting.

At the time this newsletter goes to press, here is the list of persons willing to serve:

President: Mike Andrews
 Vice President: Russell Buxton
 Secretary: Beth Kendrick
 Treasurer: Trudy Quinto

Directors for term ending 2017: Glyn Surdam and Paula Boundy (one more needed)

Additional nominations for any of the above positions will be accepted from any member of NNAS. Nominations may be made from the floor at the June general meeting as part of the election.

The NNAS Board of Directors meets in the afternoon of the first Monday of the following months: February, March, April, May, June, October, November, and December. The meetings last approximately an hour and are usually scheduled to begin at 4:00 PM.

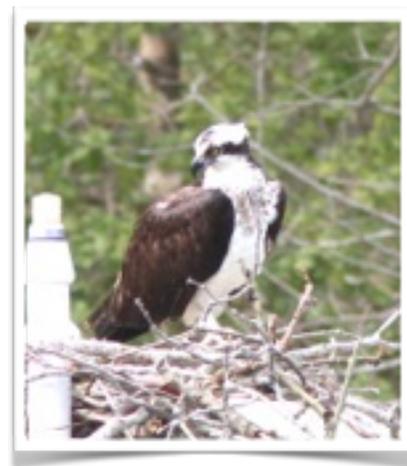
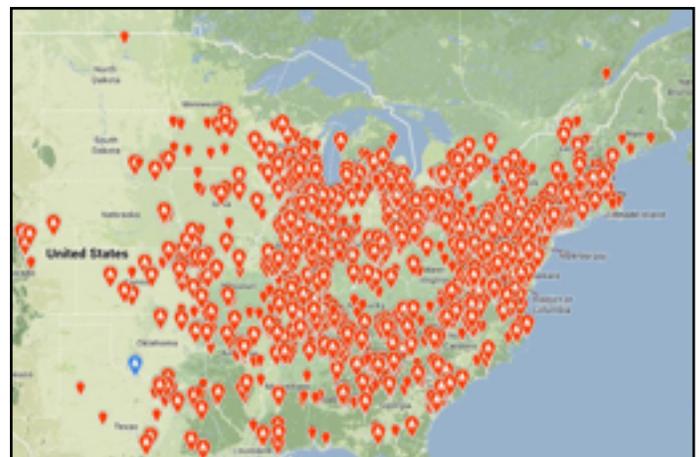
NNAS cannot function without volunteers. Please do your part to keep NNAS going strong. If you want to know more about the duties of any of the positions, please ask.

Our chapter is well-funded and able to make a big difference in the health and welfare of birds and their habitat in the Northern Neck. Yet, we have had great difficulty in finding volunteers willing to step up to the plate. If you are asked to join the slate as a board member for the coming year, please say "Yes!" But for the sake of the birds and other wildlife in our area, don't wait to be asked to serve our chapter. Volunteer!

Results of Rusty Blackbird Blitz

According to preliminary results Bob Ake, State Coordinator for Virginia, Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz 2014 obtained, Virginia birders entered more lists with Rusty Blackbirds than any other state. Ake thanked all who got out and searched for Rusty Blackbirds. He said, "The effort really paid off. There was a 50% increase in the number of lists with Rusties over last year's total. That's huge and very impressive."

Below is the March 2014 map showing Rusty Blackbird reports to ebird.



Welcome back, Osprey! The birds began showing up just a bit before St. Patrick's Day this year. The photo above was taken by NNAS unofficial photographer, Paul Servis.

Ducks Don't Bake

(Reprinted from "The Curious Birder," with permission, this article is by Maureen Eiger a State and Federally permitted Wild Bird Rehabilitator, Board Member of Wildlife Care Alliance, The Roanoke Valley Bird Club and a very curious birder.)

For some people it's a family tradition to take their kids to the local pond or river and feed bread to the ducks and geese that congregate there. Arriving with a bag of stale bread the ducks and geese approach you eagerly, anxiously waiting for a handout. It is a way to interact with wildlife, and seems harmless since the birds do eat the bread. Yes, I must confess, I'm guilty; I sometimes fed wild ducks and geese bread. That immediately stopped when I learned that feeding bread at the local duck pond or river was detrimental to their health and the water quality.

We know a junk food diet isn't healthy for people. We also know just because you like to eat it that doesn't mean it's good for you. What applies to people also applies to our feathered friends. Bread, popcorn, and crackers are considered junk food for waterfowl and can cause a multitude of problems. If you think about it, birds don't bake. So how could bread be part of a natural diet for them to eat? Therefore, I thought I would share a few things that I have learned.

When birds become accustomed to handouts, they lose their natural fear of humans and may become aggressive in order to get more food. Ever been mobbed by Canada Geese? Not fun.

Uneaten bread will rot creating algae and fungal growth that can clog natural waterways and produce toxins that can harm fish and wildlife.

Because ducks will naturally seek out an easy food source such as human handouts, ducklings will not learn to forage for natural foods as easily. For example, it's easier to grab food at a drive-thru than to prepare food at home.

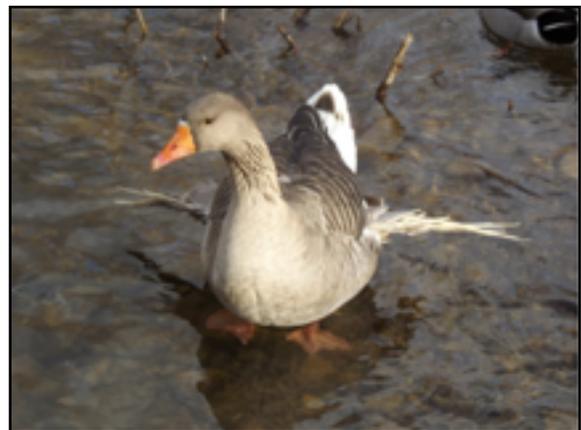
Ducklings eating junk food will not receive adequate nutrition for proper growth and development which can cause vitamin, protein and calcium deficiencies leading to weak bones, liver disease and Angel Wing. (See photo of a goose with Angel Wing)

Where an easy food source is abundant, ducks and other waterfowl will lay more eggs and the pond or lake will become overcrowded. This increases the likelihood of territorial aggression and predation.

Congregations at feeding sites can also lead to higher disease exposure among birds, including parasites, viruses and bacteria such as salmonella.

Feeding them bread also leads to increased bird feces that can harbor bacteria responsible for numerous diseases, including avian botulism. Uneaten bread can draw rats, mice and insects that harbor additional diseases that can be dangerous to humans.

Well, I think you get the picture. I am not saying that you shouldn't visit the ponds and rivers to see the ducks and geese. I just don't advocate feeding them. If this has been your family tradition, what do you tell your kids? Use it as a teaching moment for them to learn about the difference between good food and bad food. Explain why you should not feed ducks and geese bread. Tell them that the food ducks need is available all around them. Take photos or videos and enjoy watching their natural behavior.



Goose afflicted with Angel Wing (Roanoke River, Salem VA). Photo by Maureen Eiger.

A "Birds-Eye View" from Across the Pond

(Review of a *Country Life* article by Letha Harris)

The glossy British magazine, *Country Life*, has featured the tiny emerald-crowned English Kingfisher as a winter "cover boy." The photo acts as banner to the article within, titled "Why We are All Birdwatchers Now." Author and avid birder Tim Dee relates the familiar tale of a waning stereotype: the oddball birder, mucking through unsavory swampland, binoculars at the ready and dressed to resemble Old Man Willow. As that image of fashion deviance and peculiar priorities has faded, there has arisen the new, trendy birdwatcher image.

Dee cites pop culture icons, London stage stars and UK politicians among those who have made it not just acceptable, but glamorous, to engage the avian world. Just as we have here in the USA, however, in the UK there are casual observers who make mental jottings from the kitchen window (where the feeder is called "the bird table.")

And, just as occurs here, there is a certain subtle competitiveness infusing choice of binoculars. Dee reminds the reader that any beginning birder should possess a telescope as well (we'd call it a spotting scope) and be flush with field guide and notebook.

Apropos of those different species, it was interesting to read the list of sought-after sightings, notably that of the corncrake, the capercaillie, the nightingale (of Keatsian fame) and the skylark (of Shelleyan fame).

Outside of taxonomic differences, however, the aims of British birders are identical to ours. Their enthusiasm is also similar, rising steadily as we fear for the loss of an unsullied Nature.



European Kingfisher

Photo by Phil Armitage - released into public domain

NNAS Approves Grants

Annually, NNAS is presented with numerous requests for the funding of various nature-oriented activities and studies. So far this year NNAS has awarded three grants to local organizations that support the education, advancement and preservation of the environment.

Once again, we have approved a grant to "Teachers On The Bay," which will fund the education of two Northern Neck teachers about the conservation needs of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed so that they, in turn, can educate their classroom students and pass along the message of conservation.

A second grant was approved for a project at the Wild Bunch Wildlife Rehabilitation Refuge. The project involves installing gutters, downspouts, rain barrels, a drip irrigation system and landscaping around the perimeter of a recently constructed 3200-square foot flight cage designed to house large birds of prey during the time they are being rehabilitated. Besides NNAS, kindred organizations such as the Northern Neck Chapter of the Native Plant Society, Northern Neck Master Naturalists and others will contribute to this project.

NNAS Approves Grants (*continued*)

A small grant has also been awarded to Northumberland Preservation, Inc. to provide a porta-potty and rain barrel at historic Shiloh School. Conveniently located near Dameron Marsh and Hughlett Point Natural Area Preserves, the Shiloh Schools property welcomes people — birders and nature lovers — to make Shiloh their headquarters, parking area, and rest stop when visiting the area preserves.

If you have any interest in learning more about these grants or the organizations that received them, please feel free to contact any member of the NNAS Board.

The deadline for the next round of grant requests is September 1, 2014.

Past Events

Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge Topic of the NNAS April Meeting Reported by Letha Harris

There are times when we stumble upon a message that shoots, arrow-straight to, and coincident with, a present experience. Thus was it curious that, just as I finished reading a tale of great birds in flight, I heard the tale of Whooping Crane rescue. The "read" was from Patrick Leigh Fermor's *Broken Road*; the "listen," was from Sandy Spencer's address to our April meeting.

Fermor was ambling through the gracious Europe of the interwar years when, in 1934, he saw, cresting the Balkan Mountains, "an indistinct blur darkening the air...almost solid in the centre...thinned at the edges in a fringe of numberless moving specks as though the wind were blowing across a vast heap of dust or soot or feathers just out of sight...a slow airborne horde: STORKS!"

I do not know exactly what the eighty intervening years have held for the vast stork migration in and out of Africa; but I do know that our own majestic

migrating Whooping Crane has suffered near eradication. Its current, but fragile recovery is being nurtured at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge, principal subject of Sandy Spencer's lecture. Established at about the same time as that memorable stork flight, the refuge differs from some 500 other such sites in its dedication to research, as well as to sanctuary.

The decade of the 30's, with its ravages of Dustbowl and Depression, had prompted studies of the interface between farming and wildlife, and so the Department of the Interior set aside 13,000 protected acres, rich with water, sand and gravel, and placed where the coastal plain meets the Piedmont. Spooling out of Patuxent are all the positive sequelae of its research in managing wildlife diversity and conservation.

Sandy Spencer is Supervisory Wildlife Biologist at Patuxent. She has spoken to our chapter in her previous capacity as refuge biologist of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge, but her new post gives her a window onto a different natural scene. Her photos through that "window" showed a habitat being revitalized from one of exhausted farmland to one of marsh and woodland. Even its power line corridor provides shrub cover for birds.

Indoors at Patuxent, the labs have been at the forefront of pesticide studies. Here it was that DDT's toxicity, its intensity and persistence, were determined. The US Geologic Survey, operating also at this refuge, has accumulated 64,000,000 records in its Breeding Bird Survey, and here the project to secure the Whooping Crane takes center stage.

In 1941, when the program began, only 21 of these five-foot tall birds, North America's tallest, remained. By dint of extraordinary measures, there has been recovery. "Extraordinary" applies to a hatchling's imprinting upon a costumed human operating a crane puppet. "Extraordinary" refers to little quail used as "Beefeaters" to taste-test foods destined for the palates of crane princelings.

NNAS April Presentation (*continued*)

"Extraordinary" describes migration in company with a human-piloted ultralight — that effort must step up from "extraordinary" to "heroic"!

The unprepossessing ball of gray down, the infant Whooper in Sandy's slideshow, will, thanks to Patuxent, fly one day on its own, and into a solid future.

Cranes are soul-stirring, "trailing clouds of glory as they fly" (to paraphrase Wordsworth). Hearing of the rescue work, it was with a measure of relief — but also of trepidation when noting how small are the Whooping Crane numbers still — that we listened to Sandy Spencer's presentation on Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge.

Upcoming Events

Program on Purple Martins May 5, 2014

Adolph White, a Purple Martin caretaker at Bryan Park in Richmond, VA, will present a program on Purple Martins at the May 5, 2014, meeting of the Northern Neck chapter of the Audubon Society.

Taking care of, or setting up, a Purple Martin nesting colony requires different strategies depending on whether it will be in an urban area or a rural area. This program will include information about both of those strategies, along with how to protect the Purple Martins from predators including other North America birds such as House Sparrows and Starlings without harming the birds. Artwork posters and computer animation will be used to illustrate how to make predator guards, and will also show how Purple Martins sustain a nearly 6,000-mile migration to hatch, fledge, and raise their young here in North America. Each person in attendance will be given a 10-page Purple Martin Conservation Association information booklet about the birds' migration and how to manage Purple Martins during their

visit to the USA. There will be other handouts as well. White is a member of the Purple Martin Conservation Association and the VA-Bird organization that publishes the V-Bird Digest. He is also a member of the Richmond Audubon Society and is currently President of the Gone to the Birds Purple Martins festival held each year in Richmond.

Now retired, for 29 years White taught English and computer programming at the Richmond Public Schools.



Public Domain Photo of a Purple Martin House

Migration Miracle: the Monarch Butterfly June 2, 2014 NNAS Meeting Topic

In the late 1970s Larry J. Brindza became interested in Monarch Butterflies as a hawk watcher sitting in the Linden Fire Tower on top of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Northern Virginia. He noticed that good Broad-winged Hawk flights were accompanied by good monarch butterfly flights in the middle of the month of September.

Brindza takes Monarch tagging to the next level. He serves as the coordinator of the Monarch Migration Project at the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, which is located at the southern tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, an area known for its spectacular fall bird and Monarch concentrations.

Brindza's journey to this point began 15 years ago in the days of rectangular-paper tags and rubber

June NNAS Program (continued)

cement. In 2002 he added another dimension to his tagging by weighing all captured Monarchs with a small electronic scale. He also measures forewing lengths with digital calipers and monitors for the protozoan parasite, *Ophryocystis electroscirra* (Oe). This extra effort by him to collect such detailed data on each tagged Monarch is something that few other taggers do, but in the end is extremely valuable to science. Because of this, in 2008 he collaborated with Dr. Lincoln Brower and Dr. Andy Davis to publish a major article in the *Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society* using his Monarch data set.

In March 2011 Brindza was named Scientist of the Month by MONARCH NET, the North American network of Monarch butterfly monitoring programs.

Brindza enjoys seven days a week of Saturdays, now that he has retired from the Federal Government. He worked a 30-year career as a scientific reviewer in the Food and Drug Administration's Hematology & Immunology Division of the Office of In Vitro Diagnostic Device Evaluation and Safety. He lives in Burke, Virginia.



Welcome New Members

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Kyle Bailey | Melissa Gross |
| William & Deborah Barr | Harold W. Hurst |
| Dan Bashore | John Jennings |
| John F. Bott | G. Lehman |
| Margaret Bryant | Patti Saxlehner |
| Ann Cline | Cassie Thompson |
| Mabel R. Davis | Betty Vanfossen |
| Juanita Dilisio | Kathleen Webb |
| John Doggett | David Williams |
| Donald Gilbert | Kate Zullo |



Prothonotary Warbler seen on the NNAS bird walk at Beaverdam on April 14. Above photograph was taken by Paul Servis. Below is another photo of Paul's and is of a Hermit Thrush seen at Hickory Hollow on March 22, 2014.



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), is above, plus glossy National Audubon Magazine.
 Make checks payable to "National Audubon Society".

Name _____ Phone _____ - _____

Address _____ E-Mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



Northern Neck Audubon Society Resources

Officers	Committee Chairs		Media
President Mike Andrews	Birdhouse Fred Witschey &	Gifts & Mem. Open	Website www.northernneckaudubon.org suggestions to: bbwilson@kaballero.com Directory - publ. every 18 mths Newsletter - five issues annually submit ideas, articles etc. to: bbwilson@kaballero.com
V President Glyn Surdam	Ron Feldman	Hickory H'w Glyn Surdam	
Past President Paula Boundy	C. Easement W. Arnold	Membership Jessica Servis	
Secretary Beth Kendrick	Programs Nancy Garvey	Newsletter Bonnie Wilson	
Treasurer Trudy Quinto	Bird Walks Frank Schaff	Publicity Margaret Gerdts	
	Grant Review Gary Garrett &	Hospitality Jan Tyndall	
	Trudy Quinto		

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