



VSO Newsletter

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Fall 2023

Motus Tower at VSO's Bramble Hill

**Dr. Lesley Bulluck, Center for Environmental Studies
Virginia Commonwealth University**



Black-crowned Night-heron seen on 2023 OBX trip. Photo by Jan Kool.

“The Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus) is an international collaborative research network that uses coordinated automated radio telemetry to facilitate research and education on the ecology and conservation of migratory animals.”

(<https://motus.org/>). At its core, Motus is community science: a global community of researchers tracking migratory animals with a network of coordinated receiving stations. At the link above you can see an interactive map of the towers that make up the Motus network, and as of June 2023, there is a new yellow dot at the VSO's Bramble Hill! To learn more about Motus, check out the infographics here (<https://motus.org/media/>)

Bramble Hill is well positioned to contribute to this network. There are few Motus towers in the Central and Southern Appalachians, and Bramble Hill fills a difficult gap where private lands dominate and a diversity of priority bird species occur including (but not limited to) Golden Eagle, Golden-winged Warbler and Monarch butterfly.

Funding for the tower was provided in part through a grant including collaborators across the southeastern US, and from matching funds from the VSO. Several state agencies and their partners were awarded a [Competitive State Wildlife Grant](#) to erect towers and tag priority bird species in proximity to towers. I submitted a small proposal to be included in the larger grant to support construction of the tower at Bramble Hill and also tag Eastern Towhees (EATOs) as part of a collaboration with Shelly Eschelman and [Jeff Buler](#) with the [Willistown Conservation Trust](#) in Pennsylvania and University of Delaware. Both juvenile and adult towhees are included in this study because little is known about juvenile migration, a period of high mortality. At three existing Motus sites in PA, 60 tags (tiny radio transmitters) are being deployed on



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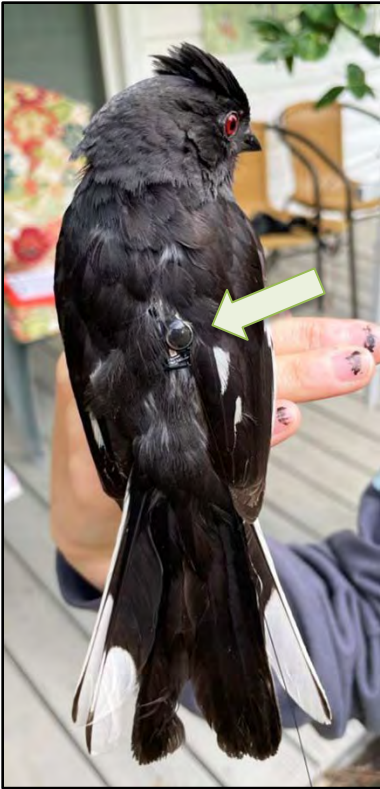
Editor: Dixie Sommers

Change of Address (USPS or email)

Virginia Society of Ornithology
PO Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188
vsomembership@cox.net

Send submissions by email. Attach MS Word document or plain text, with high resolution photos. Submissions may be edited for style and/or length.

Contact VSO President Diane Lepkowski at:
info@virginiabirds.org



A tagged Eastern Towhee, adult male.

wintering EATOs and 30 tags on breeding EATOs. At Bramble Hill, 16 tags are being deployed on breeding adults and juveniles. Birds will be followed using the Motus network to identify habitat use and migration timing throughout their annual cycle. Thus far, my students and I have tagged nine towhees (8 adults and one hatch-year bird) at Bramble Hill and hope to tag seven more birds in September before they depart for fall migration. Eastern

Towhees do not overwinter in high elevation northern portions of their range.

Although this species is still common and widespread, their population trends, especially in the Northeast, are alarming. Only 13% of the Eastern Towhee population present in 1966 remained in the early 1990s, and declines are linked to habitat loss. The Eastern Towhee is ranked in State Wildlife Action Plans as a Very High Concern Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) in the Northeast as well as Tier IV SGCN in PA and VA.

Some additional interesting tidbits about the construction of the tower itself. It was no small feat and involved so many amazing people.

✦ My neighbor G. Jordan taught my husband Jason (VSO board member) and me how to splice and solder coaxial cable and attach the appropriate connectors. At the last minute once supplies arrived, we realized we had to turn a 250-foot reel of cable into a set of 6 ready-to-connect cables.

✦ David and Larry Wimer poured the concrete pad under the tower. They live down the road from Bramble Hill and lived at Bramble Hill before it was purchased by the O'Bryans. They had



Fully installed Motus tower.

great stories to share and continue to be a resource and good neighbors for VSO.

✦ Thanks to the help of Bill Williams, the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory donated the solar panel to power the tower.

✦ This would not have been possible without the skills and help of **Rick Huffines, Eliot Berz and Quentin Miller from the Tennessee River Gorge Trust** (pictured) who consulted with me in the weeks leading up, then packed their trucks with tools, travelled from Chattanooga and spent two days erecting the tower. These guys are incredible and did a fantastic job making sure that everything was done well and looking good.



President's Message

Diane Lepkowski, VSO President

First, a big shout out to you, our members! Your involvement and support have been key to us successfully moving forward with the VSO's programs and endeavors.

The 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas: we are just two years away from the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas' planned late-2025 publication date! What a great journey we've made so far! Many of you volunteered countless hours of field work during the five-year data collection effort. And many of you have contributed generously towards our financial goal to finalize the Atlas' website-based publication. (Need the perfect gift for a bird-lover?! The Sponsor a Species effort still has many of Virginia's breeding species available for sponsorship. Your sponsorship will be recognized on that species' page of the Atlas, along with another person or organization that you may designate the sponsorship "in honor" or "in memory" of.)

Meet the Atlas Managing Editor!

The VSO is pleased to announce that Austin Kane has been selected as the Managing Editor for the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. Austin began her new duties on July 31, and is on staff at Virginia Tech's Conservation Management Institute (CMI). The VSO Board was happy to meet her at their August 5 meeting.

As Managing Editor, Austin (pictured) will plan and oversee the completion of the Atlas content for publication, including the writing of the sections and species accounts and working with the VSO and the web developer on the design and creation of the website. She will also recruit, hire and oversee the needed staff, and work with the Atlas Final Products Committee to develop plans and standards.

Austin holds a master's degree in environmental management from Duke University, and a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Virginia. She has a wide range of experience in conservation and in editing scientific publications, including co-authoring Virginia's 2015 Wildlife Action Plan with Virginia Department Wildlife Resources and assisting in rewriting the state's

Field Trips: It's no surprise that field trips continue to be popular and well attended. Much appreciation goes out to Field Trip Committee Co-chairs Meredith Bell and Lee Adams for their devotion to managing and leading these well-orchestrated trips!

Bramble Hill: There is lots of work in progress by our able committee, including ongoing habitat management for Golden-winged Warblers and other species. We're especially excited to have the newly installed MOTUS tower up and actively tracking geo-tagged birds.

In closing, I'm honored to serve as President and look forward to your continued engagement and support. Hope to see you in the field!

In the meanwhile, enjoy the birds!



2005 Action Plan to make it more relevant to conservation managers and the public. She lives in Richmond.

The recruitment and selection process for the Atlas Managing Editor was conducted by a team created by the Atlas Final Products Committee including members from the VSO, DWR and CMI. Her position is funded by the VSO's VABBA2 Fund.

Thank you for your donations and Sponsor-a-Species pledges that make this work possible!

Joan Mashburn really wanted to win the Royal Raffle!

Monica Hoel, VSO Board Member

Photos by Jessica Ruthenberg, DWR

The VSO's second Royal Raffle, held in conjunction with Virginia's Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), gave a lucky winner access to Fort Wool, Virginia's largest seabird breeding colony and raised \$3,982 for the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas.

Located in Hampton, Fort Wool is a state and national historic site directly adjacent to the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel (HRBT) that was transformed in 2020 into a temporary nesting site for breeding seabirds displaced by the HRBT expansion. It is a conservation success story for DWR and Virginia Department of Transportation.

Joan Mashburn of Arlington bought multiple tickets in hopes of securing her visit to this unique location that is closed to the public. While lunching with friends one day she said, "I really want to win this lottery." And two hours later, Dixie Sommers from the VSO board called her with the good news that she had won!



Royal Raffle winner Joan Mashburn at Fort Wool

Joan's passion for birds began 4½ years ago when she retired. She wanted an activity that would get her outside, so she went on a bird walk not really knowing if she would even enjoy it. The guide was a former college football player, and seeing this big guy's excitement got her hooked. "He started jumping up and down when he saw a Fox Sparrow,

and that made me excited, too." She is now birding 5 to 7 times a week.

She joined the Northern Virginia Bird Club, and as she expanded her knowledge, she fell in love with seabirds. She had taken Michael O'Brien's *Gulls Simplified* course, but she really didn't know anything about terns. "These guys weren't gulls – and they look like Elvis Presley."



Royal Tern at Fort Wool shading its chick.

Joan and her guest, Diane Wolverton, spent June 26 at Fort Wool with DWR and Virginia Tech staff. She participated in banding and recording observations of all the birds she saw – not just Royal Terns and Sandwich Terns. "There were large breeding colonies of Laughing Gulls, Snowy Egrets, and Brown Pelicans. We would walk past eggs that were intact, and a few minutes later we'd pass the same eggs and find them opened with hatchlings nearby. I could have stayed all day and just watched."

Joan says the most striking thing to her was how all the birds had their own "nest neighborhoods." Royal Terns laid eggs on the cement ground very close to one another. Laughing Gulls claimed the vegetated area with soil for nests, Brown Pelicans chose the large bushes and rocks on the edge, with Snowy Egrets settling on a just a couple of larger bushes."

Joan is retired from a 37-year career in accounting, and she made a point of saying she didn't want to do that work in retirement and find herself as treasurer for an organization. However, ironically, she says, "I didn't want to count anything in retirement, and now I'm counting birds."

Remembering Sue Thrasher

By Thelma Dalmas

Long-time VSO treasurer Barbara Sue Thrasher (or Sue, as most of us knew her) was born in Clifton Forge, VA on June 4, 1952, and passed away on July 11, 2023. Her 1976 marriage to Randy Thrasher resulted in a move to Lynchburg where both became active in the Lynchburg Bird Club. What a dynamic couple they made! Randy was so artistic with his carvings, paintings, and photography while Sue served the club in numerous ways, from hosting our Annual Seed Sale to acting as hospitality chair for our meetings. Sue was a keen field birder, had a great set of ears, and was the only person I've ever seen who could easily juggle an opened umbrella along with her binoculars.



Sue Thrasher. Photo courtesy of Randy Thrasher

Of course, Sue was “plenty smart”. She majored in mathematics and went on to become the Registrar of Lynchburg College and later at Randolph College. She also had a true knack of providing a sense of calmness and ease to every situation. Sue was the kindest person I've ever known and, when in her presence, things just seemed to flow more smoothly. She was

always the one with the biggest smile, welcoming everyone to the group, and making each person feel special.

Sue was elected VSO Treasurer in 1992 and served until 2014, a position she held for a record-breaking 22 years! During this time she managed the dues, conserved the VSO's funds, attended every meeting with the records well in order, prepared every budget, and listened to every “plea for money” - all with a smile on her face. During her tenure, she really was the oil that kept the financial gears of the VSO turning smoothly.

On a personal note, I felt the loss of Sue very deeply. Ten years ago my husband and I moved to Texas, but I did keep in touch with my Virginia friends. Randy and Sue made a trip to Texas where the four of us birded along the Rio Grande. For me,

the loss of Sue caused “a disturbance in the force” - that breath of pure kindness that always surrounded her was gone from this world. All of us who knew Sue are richer from the experience and we will miss her. Sue is survived by Randy, her loving husband of 47 years, her son, Brian Rogers (wife, Allison) and two grandsons.

VSO Funds a Globally Significant International Raptor Migration Site

By Bill Willilams, VSO Vice President

The VSO Conservation Committee was honored to fulfill in May 2023 a grant funding request from Pronatura Mexico (pronaturaveracruz.org) to support the organization's River of Raptors research and community outreach programs in the state of Veracruz. The grant was submitted by the River of Raptors Program Coordinator, Kashmir Wolf.

The funds were used to renew information displays at Pronatura's Chichicastle raptor migration observatory, to produce new, real-sized raptor silhouettes for its school programs and public education workshops, and to purchase and install a heavy mesh net to protect the newly painted observatory's walls and windows from the soccer games that regularly occur immediately adjacent to the facility.



New interpretive sign at the Chichicastle raptor migration observatory, supported by VSO funds.

Since 1991 Pronatura Veracruz, with its older project “Veracruz River of Raptors”, has been monitoring the fall migrations of nearly 95% of the global populations of Turkey Vultures, Mississippi Kites, Broad-winged Hawks, and Swainson’s Hawks. The program uses two counting stations located in the central plain of Veracruz, one on the roof-top of the Hotel Bienvenido in the city of Jose Cardel, the other the Mario Ramos Bird Observatory in Chichicaxtle, where Pronatura’s headquarters is located.

Each year, from August 20 to November 20, daily migration counts are tabulated for all identified species including raptors, waterfowl, pelicans and their allies, and passerines. All data are submitted to eBird and Hawkcount.

Children from the local area participate in teacher-guided after-school programs on the observatory grounds each week. Each child is supplied with binoculars and field guides. The surrounding community hosts an annual River of Raptors celebration each fall.

An Update on the Atlas

VSO and our partners DWR and CMI reached a major milestone with the hiring of Austin Kane as the atlas Managing Editor (see article above).

Another milestone, the analysis of the Atlas data by CMI, is nearing completion. The analysis will provide much of the content for the Atlas, including data for creation of maps, tables and charts for each species account.

With these two milestones achieved, the preparation of the Atlas for web publication will ramp up considerably, leading to publication in late 2025.

Publication of the Atlas will be made possible by your donations to the VABBA2 Fund! As of August

31, the VABBA2 Fund receipts (cash and pledges) stood at \$168,183, or 56 percent of our \$300,000 goal.

This progress has been outstanding, thanks to all who have donated or Sponsored-a-Species. A big THANK YOU! goes to the 441 donors – individuals, bird clubs, other organizations and businesses – who have donated during 2022 and 2023.

If you have not yet donated or would like to sponsor a species, now is a great time to do so! <https://www.virginiabirds.org/about-vabba2>

Make sure your VSO membership is current for 2024!

With a current membership, you can continue to participate in VSO field trips – like the OBX trip in February 2024 – and continue to receive VSO publications and announcements of special events, updates on the funding and progress of the final Breeding Bird Atlas publication, and Bramble Hill.

The VSO has substantial commitments in 2024 and in the coming years. So, we need your continued support.

You can renew using the form on the back of this newsletter – clip it out and mail it with your check to the address on the form. Even easier, you can renew quickly and easily on the [VSO web site](#).

If you are able, please make a year-end donation (tax deductible) to one of the VSO’s special funds, using the paper form or on the web site. Membership dues alone do not allow the VSO to accomplish all we need to do for our scholarship recipients, Bramble Hill, the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas, and the Conservation Fund.

Thank you for your ongoing support!

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VSO Winter Field Trip North Carolina Outer Banks

February 2-4, 2024

Make plans to join us for the VSO's Winter field trip at the Outer Banks of North Carolina February 2-4! The weekend's leaders include Bill Akers and Jerry Via, as well as VSO field trip co-chairs Lee Adams and Meredith Bell. We always have a great variety of birds—and often a few surprise species, too—no matter what the weather.

VERY Important! All VSO field trips are open to members at no charge. If you have not renewed your dues for 2024 or have not joined yet, you can **RENEW** or **JOIN** [here](#).

TRIP REGISTRATION

Please register online [HERE](#).

On the form, you'll select your preference for the Friday trips (see options below).

HEADQUARTERS

The Comfort Inn South Oceanfront in Nags Head is again the trip headquarters. There's a huge deck off the second floor, which offers great beach-viewing opportunities. The special VSO room rate is \$79 for oceanfront and \$66 for bay-view (plus tax). Ocean front rooms are available on a first come, first served basis. Contact information for the hotel is: Phone: 252-441-6315; 8031 Old Oregon Inlet Road, Nags Head, NC 27959. Reservations must be made by **January 1, 2024**, to get the special VSO rate.

MEALS

A complimentary breakfast buffet breakfast is included with your stay, beginning each morning at 6:00 AM. Lunch and dinner are on your own.

MONDAY, JAN 29, 7:30pm

We'll hold a Zoom video call to overview the weekend and have a presentation by Jerry Via. We'll record the call and send a link for the recording to all registrants afterwards.

FRIDAY, FEB 2

You have two options for Friday. Please indicate your preference when completing the registration form.



American Widgeon. Photo by Alan Mitchnick

Option 1 - Lee Adams will lead the all-day trip to Lake Mattamuskeet (90-minute drive). Meet at the Visitor's Center at 9:00 AM. Bring snacks, beverage, and lunch. Those interested will stop at Alligator River on the return trip to listen and watch for Short-eared Owls at dusk.

Option 2 - For those who prefer less driving, Meredith, Bill and Jerry will cover areas closer to the hotel in the morning. We'll meet at 8:15 AM at Pea Island Visitor's Center parking lot. Lunch is on your own. At 1:30pm, we'll meet at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and explore areas that won't be covered on Sunday's AM trip. Those interested can stay until dusk with Lee Adams' groups to listen for Short-eared Owls.

SATURDAY

AM: Visit the impoundments of Pea Island NWR and surrounding areas. We'll divide into smaller groups, and every group will visit all areas. Lunch is on your own.

PM: Visit Jennette's Pier, the beach, and other nearby areas. In the past, species of note at the pier included Dovekie, Razorbill, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned Grebe, and Northern Gannet. At 3:00 PM we'll gather at Bodie Lighthouse to view waterfowl from the platform.

5:30 PM: A tally of the weekend's species in the Neptune Room on the 2nd floor.

SUNDAY

AM: Explore Alligator River NWR. Drive on your own and meet at 8:30am at the main entrance on Milltail Road.

Come prepared for variable weather, lots of birds and a great time! If you have any questions, contact field trip coordinator Meredith Bell at 804-824-4958 or merandlee@gmail.com.



Tundra Swans and friends at OBX. Photo by Kathy Richardson

**Gloucester County
VSO Field Trip Report
June 2-4, 2023**

Meredith Bell, VSO Field Trip Co-chair

We couldn't have asked for more beautiful weather and abundant birds for the 80 participants who attended the first-ever VSO field trip to Gloucester County June 2-4!

While the two local parks, Beaverdam and Woodville, were productive, most people agreed that spending all day Saturday exploring the different areas of Machicomoco State Park was their favorite part of the trip.

Highlights included:

✦ **Beaverdam** (Main and North entrances): Prothonotary and Hooded Warblers, Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher nest with adults feeding young

✦ **Machicomoco:** Grasshopper Sparrows, Northern Bobwhite, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Orchard Oriole heard or seen in different areas of

the park. Abundance of Indigo Buntings, Blue Grosbeak, and Field Sparrows.

✦ **Woodville:** Kildeer on nest in one of the parking lots, Male and Female Summer Tanagers flying in close to feed on ripe berries in bushes in that same parking lot.

Species outside the parks – like Seaside Sparrow and Willet – were added when some people visited the Guinea Marsh area of the county.

Due to the enthusiastic response by attendees, we'll be adding Gloucester County to the mix of locations we include for summer field trips.

Visit the VSO Facebook page to see pictures of many species seen over the weekend, thanks to the many talented photographers among our VSO members.

Many thanks to our field trip leaders, who made this wonderful experience possible: Nancy Barnhart, Harry Colestock, Tom and Susan Crockett, and Dave Youker. They were fantastic!

You can find the complete list of 101 species from the Gloucester weekend on the VSO [website](#).

New VSO members – May 24 – September 4, 2023

Pete Anderson, Glen Allen Robert C. Bradbury, Blacksburg Samuel Burkholder, Abingdon Natalie Cavalieri, Beaverdam Mary Crigler, Warrenton Emma Cummings, North Chesterfield Oleksii Dubovyk, Norfolk Michelle Gianvecchio, Williamsburg Jennifer Grimes, Colonial Beach Rachel Haile, Mechanicsville Judith Hinch, Chesapeake Willis Jenkins, Charlottesville	Rebecca Kinnison, Gloucester Bryan Knedler, Warsaw Alex Lee, Lynchburg T Michael Likins, Chesterfield Stephen Lipps, Gloucester Hannah Martin, Charlottesville Megan Massa, Fairfax Donna McAdams, Virginia Beach Sarah Meister, Charlottesville Colleen Mizuki, Alexandria Paula Perdoni, Williamsburg	Justin Proctor, Front Royal Elizabeth Redpath, Dunbar, WV Timothy Reid, Midlothian Kevin Roback, Springfield Sherry Rollins, Gloucester Brenda Seidman, Falls Church Richard Smith, Harrisonburg Sarah Sterzing, Norfolk Debra Swinford, Virginia Beach Nik Teichmann, Troy David Yeager, Gloucester
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Ode to the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Natural Area (and birding)

By Amy Hanson, January, 2022

On a cool winter's day
After days of delay
I made good on my mission to trek

Round the path through the woods
And the scrub and the grass
To see what might be on deck

Not expecting much new
'cept a Creeper or two
I enjoyed more the sun than the shade

When out of the blue
Came a chorus anew
Up high at the edge of the glade

Over and up
Through bare branches I saw
A flock of birds creating the chatter

Some dark, some tan
A yellow eye, perhaps
But I needed to see them better

Running back for my scope
I hoped they would stay
But alas, they knew I was coming

Off they had flown
And with them my hopes
Of knowing just what to call them

Not Red-wings or Waxwings
Not Starlings or Grackles
Of this I was quite sure

I knew what they should be
Or at least what they could be
But lost out on my chance to confirm

So I packed up my scope
But continued my route
For sure there was more to attend

An hour down the path
Cold fingers intact
I rounded the final creek bend

On the soft spongy ground
Made wet by the snow
Foraged Robins and Robins aplenty

But in their midst
Was a bird with a twist
It was dark, it was not a Robin

With a sigh and a smile
I watched as it fed
In the leaves with a blue and black tail

Mottled brownish and black
With pale eyes and fine rust
Rusty Blackbird it was, without fail

Then off it flew
To join up with its crew
Down the way as light faded to gray

Off I went to my car
Then the road, then my yard
Giving thanks for another great day

On January 22, 2022 there was a flock of 30 or more Rusty Blackbirds at the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Natural Area in Greensboro, a new species for the location.

Amy Hanson is a birder in Greensboro, NC.

Right: Rusty Blackbird, photo by Kathy Richardson



American Kestrel Banding Report, 2023 — Highland County, VA John Spahr & Patti Reum

This was a good year for banding kestrels. The weather was cooperative, with no late or unseasonal severe freezes. We succeeded in banding 214 birds, of which 22 were adults and 192 were nestlings. This represented a slight increase over prior years.

NESTLING BANDING SUMMARY

Only years 2021, 2022 and 2023 had relative comprehensive efforts (chart 1). These three years show an increasing trend in banded nestlings as more boxes were accessed each successive year. The quantities, however, are not a true tally of the total nestlings in our research area, because annual efforts varied due to personal schedules, weather and timing.



A healthy brood of plump nestlings reluctantly awaiting to be banded.

For example, in 2021, our first banding of nestlings was May 18, and we banded an additional 12 days until June 1. That was followed by a 16-day hiatus due to personal schedules, with a final banding on June 18 from a single box. In 2022 we banded a total of only 12 days between May 20 and June 16.

In 2023, we banded for 13 days between May 18 and June 12. Then a long hiatus until July 4 when 3 boxes of nestlings were banded. This was the first year we banded into July.

In 2023 we banded nestlings in only 48 of the



June 9 - Eight eggs (usual clutch max is 5) suggests "egg dumping" or intraspecific brood parasitism where a second female lays its eggs in another's nest. Not common, but does occur with kestrels.

58 boxes that had evidence of egg laying. At least three boxes were depredated, one by black rat snake, others by villains unknown. One depredated box that had 5 eggs a week earlier was empty except for a headless downy chick on its roof at our next visit. These nestlings may have fallen prey to an Eastern Screech-Owl, which commonly decapitate prey. And, this box did have a roosting owl in it earlier this spring.

Two boxes had unhatched and unattended eggs for a prolonged period and were considered abandoned, reasons uncertain. Nest abandonment

is uncommon and may indicate a significant or repeated disturbance by a potential predator, or possible death of one of the adults. We did not attempt banding in three boxes due to difficult or unsafe access. We are considering relocating or repositioning these boxes. In

Chart 1. Banding Summary, 2020-2023

Year	ADULTS	NESTLINGS	TOTAL BIRDS	BOXES	Nestlings/Box
2023	22	192	214	46	4.2
2022	19	153	172	38	4.5
2021	39	146	176	34	4.3
2020*	7	78	85	19	4.1

**2020 - Training year with Charles Ziegenfus; full season banding effort not attempted.*

In a recent memo to all bird banders, the USGS wrote: *“If you discuss or share your banding projects to any public platform or social media, please indicate all banding, marking, and sampling is being conducted under a federally authorized Bird Banding Permit issued by the U.S. Geological Survey.”*

Also, bird banders are required to obtain a permit from their state wildlife department. We have both the Federal and state permits for this research – in case you were wondering. This year we asked for, and received, permission to band kestrels statewide instead of on a county-by-county basis.

one box the nestlings were approaching fledging size (25+ day development) on June 12, and one promptly flew/flopped out onto the ground when the box was opened. It was captured, banded and cautiously returned to the box. Fearing that its three siblings would attempt to fledge prematurely, no further banding was attempted.

ADULT BANDING SUMMARY

The adult banded birds include seven trapped with *Bal-chatri* traps under the banding license of Charles Ziegenfus in 2020. All others were hand captured within our boxes. These recaptured birds (“recaps”) offer an early insight into the dynamics of our kestrel population. After all, the purpose of banding birds is to hopefully recapture them (or recover bands from dead birds) thereby learning about their movements and vitality.

To date we’ve recaptured 24 birds and recovered one band from a road-killed male. Eleven of these were banded as nestling and 14 as adults. All were local birds that we banded, with no “immigrants” from other banding locations.

When we compared the locations of the original banding and subsequent recapture (chart 2) we noted significant site fidelity. 18 of the 25 (72%) were recaptured within 5 miles of their banding location; none strayed more than 15.5 miles. These data are limited but support our supposition that we have a resident, non-migratory, population. By continuing this banding project into the future, gathering additional data, we hope to better elaborate on this dynamic.

Chart 2. Locations of banding and recapture	
DISTANCE (miles)	NUMBER
Same Box	4
Less than 1.0	7
1.0 to 4.9	7
5.0 to 9.9	2
10.0 to 15.5	5
Greater than 15.5	0

A note from John Spahr: Banding kestrels is best done with a second person to either hold the bird or its foot, assist in applying the band, and/or documenting the data. Patti most capably performed the lion’s share of these duties. A few bandings were assisted by interested others, whom I would like to acknowledge and thank.

Nancy Spahr, Lincoln Martin, Georgeann Eubanks and Donna Campbell helped with at least one brood of nestlings. Steve Rannels assisted with seven broods and two adult recaptures. Furthermore, several landowners where our boxes are located observed (and at times photo-graphed) the capture and banding process. I’m pleased about the interest of these assistants and observers and hope the experience will expand their knowledge and appreciation of this fabulous falcon.



Adult male “reecap”. Previously banded as nestling in 2022 in a box 0.6 miles NNE.



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2024 VSO Membership Renewal

Name & Address: _____

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Check here if you wish to receive VSO publications electronically by email via Constant Contact. Please print your email address clearly. (Note that we do not share members' email addresses with any other organizations. The VSO may contact you by email to notify you of upcoming events, field trips, annual meetings, and organization news. You may opt out of these email notices at any time.)

New _____ Renewing _____ Gift _____

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If you have questions about your membership, contact Membership Secretary Shirley Devan at: vsomembership@cox.net

Your support means so much to the success of the VSO. Thank you!

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