



# VSO Newsletter

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SPRING 2021



## Springtime Just Ahead

*By Dan Bieker, VSO President*

Pandemic fatigue; what soul hasn't experienced that by now. Hugs, handshakes, cozy dinner parties - no doubt we'll all celebrate when the free flow of these and so many other activities can return. In the meantime, we count our blessings and rejoice that we can still engage our passion for the wonders of the natural world, especially birding. Maybe not in the group gatherings we're used to, but what safer place to be than out on the trails.

And not just for those of us already hooked. The Covid pandemic has sent more folks than ever outdoors, and many are discovering the joy of birding. City and county parks are seeing record usage. Some have even had to shut down or restrict access due to overcrowding. Even trailhead parking pull-offs in remote areas are sometimes full. All good, that more people are getting out.

With that, however, comes the responsibility to act ethically and set good examples. We can all probably recall instances when we've fallen short. Respecting private property is an obvious tenet of ethical birding. No sighting is worth disrespecting a landowner. The technology boom has brought many advantages, but the exponential use of playback to attract birds for recreational birding and photography is increasingly problematic.

As stated in the [VSO Principles of Birding Ethics](#): "The VSO does not endorse the use of recordings or other artificial lures to attract birds" - and goes on with more detail. This is especially important during the breeding season. Taking time to experience a bird undisturbed by artificial stimulation can increase awareness of subtle characteristics, and the likelihood of more satisfying looks when they happen. It's insightful to hear seasoned birders reflect not only on the excitement of discovery that birding brings to life, but also the broader benefits it can foster: intuition, self-discipline, and especially - patience.

While we all struggle with limitations the pandemic is causing, the VSO continues to explore opportunities for birding enthusiasts to remain engaged. Stay tuned for ideas and updates in the months ahead. We're hoping that come September we'll be able to offer the always popular weekend field trip to Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. In the meantime, anticipation mounts for the return of spring migrants, just around the corner.

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**Editor:** Dixie Sommers

### Change of Address (USPS or email)

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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 Dan Bieker at:  
[danbieker@gmail.com](mailto:danbieker@gmail.com)

# VSO American Kestrel Project - History and Update

By Dan Bieker, VSO President

In 2014, the VSO undertook a projected five-year initiative to place 400 American Kestrel nest boxes in suitable habitat throughout Virginia. A challenging goal, but soon an initial team of four volunteers took shape, jokingly referred to as the "Kestrel Strike Force" with the corny motto (a la Star Trek):

*Habitat, the Final Frontier. These are the voyages of the Kestrel Strike Force. Its five year mission - to explore strange new backroads; to seek out new pastures and new avian civilizations; to boldly go where no birder has gone before!*

Well, at least it was good to start off with a sense of humor.

Thanks to two grants from conservation partners and with the initial team in place, the project got underway. First step - secure materials to begin building boxes. For durability and ease of handling, northern white cedar turned out to be an ideal lumber choice, and we ended up purchasing 4000 board feet (almost 4 tons) of it from a mill in New Hampshire, had it shipped to a warehouse in Richmond, and then on by pick-up truck and trailer loads to Albemarle County where the boxes were built.

Kestrels are birds of the countryside and open skies. Areas of extensive farm fields with brushy fencerows and scattered trees make for the best habitat, especially in the Piedmont, Shenandoah Valley and on into the mountains.

But the logistics of finding appropriate sites for the nest boxes took some doing. Word of the project had to be spread and landowner permission secured. Bird clubs and other conservation organizations, especially Virginia Working Landscapes, were helpful with outreach.

Based out of Albemarle County, the crew would set out on one, sometimes two-day excursions putting up ten or more boxes a day. Lots of work, yes, but also lots of fun. Traversing remote backroads, meeting all sorts of interesting characters, especially older folks hanging on to their farms and way of life, was a treat. A four-wheel drive truck was essential, as was caution involving enraged bovines, rusty barb wire, muddy sinkholes and worst of all - chiggers.



Dan Bieker and Kevin Mitchell at Box #500!

Often the best sites were not from pre-arranged contacts but found just cruising the backroads. We'd knock on doors, explain the program, and ask permission to place a box on the property. After concerns were allayed most people said yes even if they had no concept of what a Kestrel is. A frequent question went something like "will they eat my chickens, kitty or little dachshund?"

It wasn't uncommon to arrive at the home of someone who had put in a request, only to find that the habitat wasn't suitable. In that case we'd offer to erect a nest box for Eastern Screech Owls (same as a

*VSO American Kestrel Project, continued*

Kestrel box) if they'd be willing to make a donation. Almost always they were happy to, and the money went back into the project. About 50 of the total boxes from the program went for Screech Owls.

Other desirable species that sometimes occupy Kestrel boxes include Northern Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Eastern Bluebirds. Not so good - squirrels, hornets, and especially European Starlings. Since Kestrels seek out nest sites earlier in the season than Starlings, boxes should be put up before mid-February to give kestrels first dibs.

Avoiding areas of human activity can also help. To take advantage of fencerows as ideal locations we attached the majority of boxes on top of two opposing 2x4's and would then screw the assembly to sturdy posts. Cooper's Hawks will prey on Kestrel fledglings, so keeping nest boxes away from woodland edges where the hawks like to patrol is a good practice.

Causes for the decline of Kestrels are many, and there's much still to learn. Loss of farmland and the role of pesticides in declining insect populations are serious concerns. Nest boxes alone won't save them. The VSO project seeks to expand housing opportunities but also to bring attention to the

plight. Familiarity with a species is the first step to engendering a desire to act.

By the start of 2021 we've been able to exceed our goal, with a total of 504 boxes in 46 counties around the state. With that phase of the project concluded, the

effort going forward will concentrate on box monitoring projects in Highland and Page counties, and expanded outreach to landowners concerning habitat enhancement and preservation. What we do for Kestrels will also benefit a wide variety of other species, especially grassland birds.

Thanks to all who have generously supported the project so far, and to any who might in the future. As spring approaches and the grass greens, keep an eye on utility lines and treetops for this iconic little raptor, an enduring symbol of Virginia's rural heritage.



*American Kestrel  
Painting by Diana Sudyka*

*The Kestrel Strike Force in the field: Mary Ames, David White, Patti Reum and Dan Bieker*



## In Remembrance of Lewis Barnett



We are very sad to say that the Richmond Audubon Society, the Virginia Society of Ornithology, and the entire Virginia birding community have lost a true friend and dedicated member. Lewis Barnett passed away recently after a long battle with cancer. Lewis was the consummate Audubon member, serving on

the Virginia Audubon Council and, for Richmond Audubon, in too many roles to mention here, including as President, long time board member, the keeper of a wealth of information on birding in the Richmond area, one of our very best birding trip leaders, our IT person at member meetings, and an all-around friendly, supportive member and birder. In many ways he had become the heart and soul of Richmond Audubon.

For the VSO, Lewis was secretary of the Virginia Avian Records Committee (VARCOM). He also was a regional coordinator for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas field data collection.

His obituary can be found at <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/timesdispatch/name/b-barnett-obituary?pid=197576379>. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations to richmondaudubon.org and the [Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research](#) in his memory. A memorial service is planned for a later time.

*Leonard Smock, Richmond, VA*

## VSO Conservation Grants for 2021

The VSO is pleased to announce the award of the 2021 Conservation Grants. Five grants totaling nearly \$2,500 were awarded to the recipients shown below for a variety of projects related to avian conservation.

The VSO also provided a grant of \$1680 from the Kestrel Fund to Bert Harris of The Clifton Institute, Warrenton, VA, for purchase of 2 tracking units for an American Kestrel study in Fauquier, Rappahanock and possibly Warren counties.

Recipient	Purpose
Emily Williams, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.	Migration study on American Robins to study patterns of seasonal migration, why some migrate and why some do not, yielding information on species distribution and population trends. VSO funds for isotope assays. \$500
Haley Howerin, Radford University, Radford, VA	Study of species disturbance from anthropogenic environmental disturbances (artificial light at night, noise pollution and human interaction) on Eastern Bluebird and Tree Swallows. \$477
Liz Altieri, Radford University, Radford, VA	Chimney swift tower in Radford, VA \$100
Moira Meehan, William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA	Research on window collision and migrating birds. \$500
Catherine McGrathe, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	Study of Eastern Screech-Owls nest box use as it relates to temperature and urbanization. VSO funds for purchase of camera traps to monitor nest boxes. \$901

# Provide Your Thoughts on the Virginia Wildlife Viewing Plan

By Jessica Barnes, Virginia Tech

Over the past 3.5 years, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has been working collaboratively with researchers at Virginia Tech's Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation to develop a state-wide *Wildlife Viewing Plan*.

This Wildlife Viewing Plan is the first comprehensive plan for engaging with and supporting wildlife viewers developed for the DWR. It was co-produced by an 18-member Technical Advisory Committee, composed of DWR staff, and a 20-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee, composed of individuals and organizational representatives with experience and interest in wildlife viewing in Virginia.

The resulting Virginia Wildlife Viewing Plan provides direction and priorities to orient the DWR's efforts related to wildlife viewing through 2031. Researchers at Virginia Tech are now working with DWR staff to collect broad public input on the draft Wildlife Viewing Plan to ensure that the plan reflects the values and interests of people throughout the Commonwealth.

You can provide input any time through **March 3, 2021**. To view the plan and share your thoughts, visit [the DWR website](#).

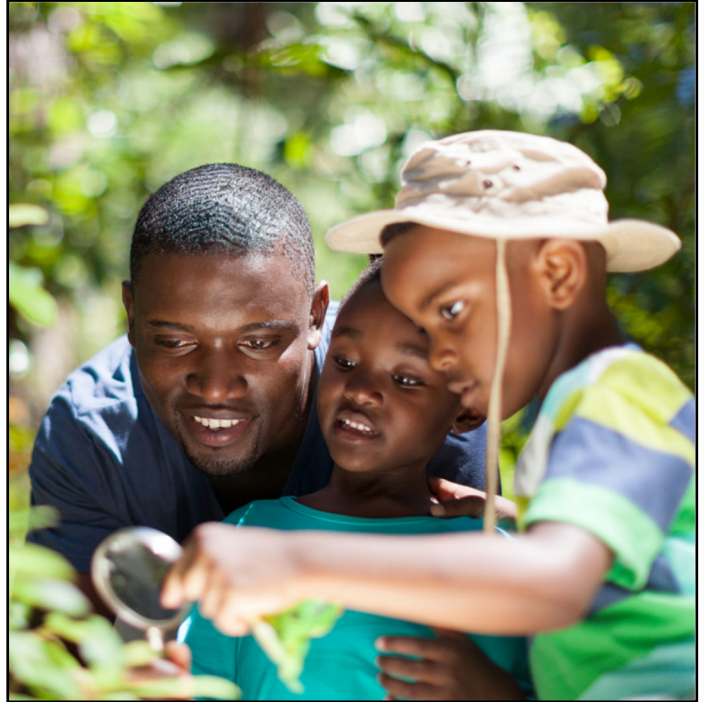


Photo courtesy of Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

## MORE ABOUT NED BRINKLEY

The fine obituary of the late Ned Brinkley in the Winter 2020 issue of the VSO Newsletter dealt with him mainly, understandably, as a Virginia birder. Ned also played a role on the national level that deserves mention.

Ned was editor-in-chief of *North American Birds* magazine from 2001 to 2017. Older readers may remember this journal under earlier names: as *Audubon Field Notes* (1947-1970), then as *American Birds*, and since 1999 as *North American Birds*. This quarterly journal, published at first by the National Audubon Society and more recently by the American Birding Association, follows the changing seasons and documents rarities along with population trends in more usual species.

Ned made it a rich source of knowledge and pleasure. I was gratified to be part of his team as a "regional editor," reporting on summer seasons in the Hudson-Delaware Region (New York, New Jersey, and Delaware).

*Robert O. Paxton, New York City  
(Virginia native and VSO member since 1945)*

# Virginia's Groundbreaking Action to Ensure Protections for Migratory Birds

*By Becky Gwynn, Department of Wildlife Resources*

Throughout most of the 19th century, birds in the United States were hunted without regulation, leading to the extinction or near-extinction of numerous avian species by the early 1900s.

Through the persistent efforts of concerned citizens and bird conservation organizations, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was signed into law in 1918. It has saved millions if not billions of birds since its enactment.

The core of the MBTA makes it unlawful to pursue, hunt, take, capture, kill, possess, sell, purchase, barter, import, export, or transport any migratory bird, or any part, nest, or egg of any such bird, unless authorized under a federal permit. "Take" is defined as: pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to do any of the above. Historically, "take" was interpreted to include "incidental take" of birds; that is, the unintentional loss or injury of a bird resulting from a legal activity (e.g., avian mortality caused by birds striking a power line).

## The Reinterpretation of the MBTA

On December 22, 2017, the Department of Interior (DOI) Solicitor issued a reinterpretation of the MBTA, which declared that incidental take was no longer prohibited under the MBTA, thus removing this critical protection for birds. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) codified the reinterpretation in federal regulations on January 8,

2021 that were scheduled to become effective on February 8. In early February, the federal government delayed the effective date to early March and initiated a new public comment process regarding these regulations.

State fish and wildlife agencies have long relied on the protective strength of the MBTA as the primary regulatory mechanism to protect birds from human activities. Moreover, states have looked upon the USFWS as the principal authority to protect and conserve migratory birds. The federal reinterpretation and regulations of the past four years have necessitated that states step into this lead role to minimize and prevent incidental take of migratory birds.

## The Virginia Response

In a statement given on February 14, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam announced that "[t]he Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) will develop a regulation to define and permit incidental take of migratory birds for major commercial, industrial, and construction projects in the Commonwealth. This rule would make Virginia one of the first states to "backstop" recent federal rollbacks of longstanding migratory bird protection."

Since the announcement, the DWR has worked on the development of a regulation that would provide critical protections to our bird species at the state level. Stakeholders representing conservation and regulated community interests were invited to help shape the regulation language following an early public comment period on an initial draft. In December 2020, the Board of Wildlife Resources proposed the regulation for consideration and solicited public comment with the comment period ending February 22, 2021. No other state in the country has addressed the incidental take of wildlife at such a scale.

## The Proposed Regulation

The regulation being considered by the Board of Wildlife Resources will establish a framework for a permitting program on the incidental take of migratory birds in Virginia. It proposes to authorize



*Royal Terns nesting at Rip Raps Island, May 2020, Photo by Meghan Marchetti, courtesy, VDWR*

### *Protections for Migratory Birds, continued*

incidental take of migratory birds (excluding endangered and threatened species) for certain “sectors.” Construction activities within the following sectors will be required to obtain a permit: commercial and industrial activities; oil, gas, and wastewater disposal pits; methane or other gas burner pipes; communications towers; electric transmission and distribution lines; wind and solar energy projects; and transportation projects. These sectors were selected because of their historic impacts on birds. This approach is similar in concept to other environmental permitting in the Commonwealth.

The overarching framework is the first piece to put into place. Once that is completed, the DWR will

begin work on sector-specific plans. For each sector, the regulatory plan will define thresholds for coverage; best practices that must be employed to be covered under a permit; any geographic or species-specific requirements; compensation required if impacts cannot be avoided or minimized; etc. The development of the sector-specific plans will involve stakeholder engagement throughout, including the conservation and regulated communities.

The Board of Wildlife Resources will hear the results of the public comment period and consider any changes recommended by the staff at its meeting on March 18, 2021. This regulation is likely to serve as a model for other states across the country in months and years to come.

## **DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER TO RENEW YOUR VSO MEMBERSHIP FOR 2021!**

*By Shirley Devan, VSO Membership Secretary*

We've all got a lot on our minds – how and where to get a vaccine, coping still with masks, social distancing, and cabin fever, and relentless winter weather.

But you want to be ready to join in VSO field trips when they start up later in the year. And you certainly want to be able to join in FREE on the VSO's upcoming webinars. Our first session February 26 was a great success, and more are in the works.

To join us for these special opportunities, you need to be up-to-date on your VSO membership.

If you've already renewed for 2021, MANY THANKS! If not, please do so soon. We want to stay connected with our members and provide insightful learning experiences – in the field (when we're able) and online until then.

**Dues are not expensive!** If you're able, please consider renewing at a higher level - \$25 for the Family level; \$35 for the Sustaining level; or \$60 for a Contributing membership.

Use the membership renewal form on the last page of this newsletter or renew online (safely and easily with your debit or credit card or PayPal account) at the [VSO website](#).

**PS:** If you're unsure of your membership status, the Membership Secretary is happy to check for you. Contact Shirley Devan at: [vsomembership@cox.net](mailto:vsomembership@cox.net)

And you'll know that your dues contribute to these important VSO projects:

**Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2) has entered the review, analysis, and publication phase.** We're counting on you to make an additional [donation to the VABBA2](#). Every donation is important!

**Youth Outreach and Scholarships:** The VSO places strong emphasis on engaging young folks in conservation, especially birding. And we are proud to support graduate students across Virginia who are contributing to our knowledge of Virginia's avifauna.

**American Kestrel Nest Box Project:** Our future efforts will concentrate on continued monitoring as well as landowner education to enhance and protect habitat.

**VSO-Sponsored Field Trips:** We will continue to offer seasonal field trips to various regions of the state (and beyond) as soon as we can safely gather together. The 2021 Chincoteague Field Trip is already booked for September and the hotel is reserved! Stay tuned for more details as 2021 unrolls.

We hope you will support the VSO again in 2021 and help carry on our 90+ years of promoting and preserving Virginia's diverse birdlife. Thank you!

**Recent new VSO Members** are shown on the next page. It is a nice long list!

## New VSO Members since December 1, 2020

Don Aldridge, Hardy VA  
 Cindy Andrews, Henrico VA  
 Byron Birtman, Hague VA  
 Christina Bolgiano, Fulks Run VA  
 David Boltz, Lake Frederick, VA  
 Mary Brosnan, Falls Church VA  
 N. Douglas Burgoyne, Newport News VA  
 Betty Burke, Roanoke VA  
 Elsa Chen, East Brunswick NJ  
 Mary Coker, Moseley VA  
 Daphne Cole, Blackstone VA  
 Joseph Cooney, White Stone VA  
 JoAnn Dalley, Charlottesville VA  
 Shannon Dart, Springfield, VA  
 Hillary Davidson, Warrenton VA  
 Debra Dodson, Danville VA  
 Annie Downing, Roanoke VA  
 Bennett Ebay, Herndon VA  
 R B Eggleston, Bridgewater VA  
 Maureen Eiger, Roanoke, VA  
 Tish Folsom, Greenville VA  
 Nancy Forrest, Midlothian VA  
 Aaron Graham, Oakland MD  
 Terry Grimes, Roanoke VA  
 Richard Guthrie, New Baltimore NY  
 Ginger Hays, Arlington VA  
 Caroline Heald, Rixeyville VA  
 John Hogan, Windsor VA  
 Kevin Howe, Kilmarnock VA  
 Henry Howe, Orange VA  
 Joanne Hutton, Arlington VA  
 Brenda Hyson, Scottsville VA  
 Emily Jasper, Williamsburg VA  
 Steve Johnson, Oakton VA  
 Becky Keller, Blacksburg VA  
 Patty Lane, Sperryville VA  
 Edmund LeGrand, Hume VA  
 Sue Lietz, Rhinelander WI  
 Marguerite Long, Onancock VA  
 Roxanne Machamer, Williamsburg VA  
 Christine Magee, Alexandria VA  
 George Martin, Williamsburg VA  
 Virginia Mathewson, Henrico VA  
 James Maw, North Prince George VA

Julie Maynard, Middletown MD  
 Judy McCann, Burkeville VA  
 Judith McCord, Christiansburg VA  
 Annie McEntee, Montpelier VA  
 Guy McGrane, Boone NC  
 Lois McKim, Crozet VA  
 Lisa Mease, Glen Allen VA  
 Scott Mewborn, Henrico VA  
 Jim Minick, Rural Retreat VA  
 Dana Moseley, Staunton VA  
 Mark Mullins, Radford VA  
 Brian Murphy, New Castle VA  
 Herb Myers, Keezletown VA  
 Alex Newmark, Forest VA  
 Cynthia O'Connell, Reston VA  
 David Peters, Nickelsville VA  
 Dori Rhodes, Leesburg VA  
 Bernadette Rigley, Washington DC  
 Chris Risley, Peterborough ONT Canada  
 Michael Sanders, Bristol VA  
 John Schladweiler, New Ulm MN  
 Eve Schwartz, Keswick VA  
 Laura Sebastianelli, Alexandria VA  
 Karen Sheffield, Alexandria VA  
 Alex Shipherd  
 Loretta Silvia, Virginia Beach VA  
 Virginia Smith, Onancock VA  
 Ty Smith, Green Bay VA  
 Mark Sopko, Mathews VA  
 Susan Stanton, Driftwood TX  
 Myrlene Staten, Madison VA  
 Mary Jean Sullivan, Cloverdale VA  
 Byron Swift, Washington DC  
 Russell Taylor, Vienna VA  
 Ben Taylor, Peterborough ONT Canada  
 Brenda Thomason, Richmond VA  
 Robert Toner, Onancock VA  
 Lucy Uncu, Falls Church VA  
 Joanna Vondrasek, Charlottesville VA  
 Susan Walton, Gloucester VA  
 Nancy Wenning, Madison Heights VA  
 Diane Woolverton, Arlington VA  
 Virginia Wycoff, Williamsburg VA



# What's Happening on VABBA2?

*By Dixie Sommers, VSO Newsletter Editor*

What will the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas – VABBA2 - be as a finished product? This question is of great interest to many Virginia birders and organizations, especially the volunteers who gathered atlas data in the field over the last five years.

The VSO, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and the Conservation Management Institute (CMI) at Virginia Tech have created an Atlas Final Products Committee, as reported in the Winter edition of this newsletter.

The Committee is now digging into details such as: who is the audience for the atlas, what information do they want and need, how have other states addressed these issues, and in what media should the final products be presented? Which products will be funded and produced by DWR and CMI, and which by the VSO?

The Committee is starting its work by examining other recent state atlas products, especially those from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Minnesota, as well as other state atlas websites. What do they contain? How are they being used?

In parallel with the Committee's efforts, atlas data review and editing work is now underway at DWR



**Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2**

and CMI. This is expected to take the rest of 2021, after which the effort will shift to data analysis and production of various components of the final atlas, such as species breeding evidence data. This work is expected to be finished by 2025.

The VSO welcomes atlas volunteers who responded to our invitation to join VSO! We value your contributions. The VSO looks forward to your input and support as we complete this important project.

VSO also greatly appreciates the support of our members and friends of the atlas during the last year. In 2020, you donated \$34,235 towards the VABBA2. Thank you!

## **How You Can Help the VABBA2!**

- Help the VSO fund our part of the final atlas by donating on-line at [www.virginiabirds.org](http://www.virginiabirds.org) or by mail to VSO, P.O. Box 5994, Williamsburg, VA 23188-5994. Thank you!
- Let us know your questions and comments by email to [VSOAtlas@gmail.com](mailto:VSOAtlas@gmail.com)
- Receive e-mail atlas updates from DWR by subscribing at <https://dwr.virginia.gov/atlas-updates/>
- Check out atlas information on the VSO website <http://www.virginiabirds.org/vabba2> and the DWR website [www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/virginia-breeding-bird-atlas](http://www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/virginia-breeding-bird-atlas).

# Purple Martins Conservation in Williamsburg

*By Cheryl Jacobson, VSO Board Member and President, Williamsburg Bird Club*

Williamsburg Bird Club is focusing on conservation through legislation, both locally and nationally, and through species preservation and restoration. We have particularly worked to establish Purple Martin colonies and have just installed our fourth colony at VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Science). Our other three are at New Quarter Park, York River State Park, and Chickahominy Riverfront Park. Check them out if you are in the Williamsburg area.

We began by attending the Purple Martin Field Day Event that is held annually in Louisa, Virginia, on the Wood's property. The Wood family has expanded their colony from four pairs of Purple Martins in 1992 to more than 120 nesting pairs. They highly recommended Troyer Gourds and poles which we have found to be of excellent quality.

We joined the [Purple Martin Conservation Association](#). We also reached out to the Northern Virginia Purple Martin Initiative, founder Michael Bishop, and he has been very helpful. We now have a Facebook page modeled after their page. It can be found at Facebook: **COVA Purple Martin Project**, which stands for Colonial Virginia Purple Martin Project.



*Purple Martin, photo by Catherine Millar*

## Why Purple Martins?

First, Purple Martins in the East depend on us to provide nest sites and their population is seriously declining nationwide. The [Audubon Field Guide](#) describes the conservation status: "Has declined seriously in parts of the west, and currently declining in the east. Reasons are not well known, but competition with starlings for nest sites may be involved."

One of my favorite articles is from [Purple Martins - How it All Began \(birdwatching.com\)](#). At the end of this birdwatching.com article, you also can find many tips for establishing a colony.

**New Refocus.** Williamsburg Bird Club first established a Purple Martin Committee in 1978 and began installing Purple Martin houses and banding birds. That year they banded 600 Purple Martins. Many of you may have seen the roost in Hampton in the 80's that included 80,000 Purple Martins. In our way, we hope to help lessen the serious decline in the population of this very special species.



*Williamsburg Bird Club members hanging Troyer gourds at one of their colonies. Photo by Cheryl Jacobson.*

## VSO Welcomes New Editors of *The Raven*



*Jennifer and John Styrsky*

We are excited to welcome John and Jennifer Styrsky as new coeditors of VSO's scientific journal, *The Raven*. This husband-wife team are University of Lynchburg faculty members.

The new address for submissions (also posted on our website) is: [raven submissions@lynchburg.edu](mailto:raven submissions@lynchburg.edu)

Jennifer is an Assistant Professor in the Westover Honors College and School of Sciences. She discovered birds on a field ecology class trip to Florida as undergraduate student at The University of Chicago. After several years of working as an avian field biologist in Australia and the western US, Jennifer returned to graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. For her

Ph.D. research, she studied the breeding biology of Spotted Antbirds in central Panama.

Jennifer teaches general ecology, natural resources stewardship, and tropical biology courses and advises honors research students in various scientific disciplines. She has incorporated citizen science projects investigating hummingbird activity and migration into one of her courses. She is also an active volunteer with Project Feederwatch through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

John is Professor of Animal Biology at the University of Lynchburg. A fourth-generation Texan, he credits his life-long interest in birds to his grandparents, who taught him his first species, the scissor-tailed flycatcher. After graduating from Southwestern University, John worked as an avian field biologist in the US and Canada before completing a Master's thesis at Illinois State University on the breeding ecology of house wrens.

In collaboration with scientists at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology, he then investigated control of migration behavior in yellow-green vireos in Panama. John completed a Ph.D. in entomology at Auburn University. His current research centers on ecological interactions between orb-weaver spiders and ant-acacias in Panama, and on local adaptation in common milkweed, an important food plant of the monarch butterfly.

John teaches animal biology, entomology, ornithology, and general ecology, and advises undergraduate research students. He has served as the Christmas Bird Count coordinator of the Lynchburg count circle for the past seven years.

John and Jennifer live in Lynchburg with their two sons and enjoy hiking and birding in the nearby Blue Ridge Mountains and central Virginia.

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23188

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## 2021 VSO Membership Renewal

Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Contributing Membership \$60 \_\_\_\_\_ Active Membership \$20  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining Membership \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ Student Membership \$10  
\_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ Life Membership (individual) \$500

I would like to make a donation to:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 project \$ \_\_\_\_\_ VSO General Fund  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ VSO Conservation Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ VSO Endowment Fund

### VSO Merchandise

Virginia's Birdlife "Gold Book" (Rottenborn, Brinkley 2007) \$20.00  
VSO Arm Patch \$4.00  
VSO Cloisonné Pin \$5.00  
VSO Field Checklist FREE! Download the latest 2019 list at:  
<http://www.virginiabirds.org/publications/field-checklist>

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