



# VSO Newsletter

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WINTER 2020

## On the Legacy of Edward S. (Ned) Brinkley

*By Dan Bieker, VSO President*



While birding one sunny afternoon in early spring with Ned Brinkley, we heard a faint “seep” from deep in a tangle of honeysuckle along the trail. “Female Black-throated Blue Warbler” proclaimed Ned, before I could even process whether that barely audible sound came from a bird, or a bug of some kind. That was twenty-five years ago, and since then I’ve come to appreciate even more just how talented he was, and how much he contributed to the VSO and beyond.

With his passing it’s difficult to imagine a more impactful loss to the birding community, and community at large. Amazing doesn’t begin to describe just how ‘at home’ Ned could be while birding in diverse locations across Virginia as well as across the globe, and just how unselfish he could be in sharing his knowledge and talents. He brought to birding both an amazing skill as well as a passion for enjoyment, a gentle nature and sense of humor that made birding with him a pleasure for professional and novice alike.

Ned was a familiar presence on the Eastern Shore, where he made his home. There he donned many hats - hotel operator, businessman, consultant and author. But he perhaps shone brightest as a tour leader for Field Guides, the premier bird touring agency operating worldwide. Alaska, France, Finland, Iceland and Ethiopia are some of the destinations that Ned led tours to. He passed away in late November, suddenly and unexpectedly while birding in the wilds of southern Ecuador. John Rowlett, longtime friend and one of the founders of Field Guides, had this to share:

“How hard it is to lose Ned Brinkley, dear friend and highly talented Field Guides colleague, who died as he lived—allegro, richly, birding. Aside from his widely regarded smarts and intellect, all knew him as a generous person, his gift for affectionate hyperbole forever directed at inflating others, never himself. Recognized throughout the country as a birding luminary who contributed in countless ways to avian knowledge and the preservation of birds, Ned displayed a creative and adventurous spirit, and he leaves behind an expansive legacy whose vitality among VSO birders will never fade in the Virginia he so loved.”

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**Editor:** Dixie Sommers

### Change of Address (USPS or email)

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PO Box 5994  
Williamsburg, VA 23188  
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Send submissions by email. Attach text as a MS Word document or plain text. Submissions may be edited for style and/or length. Send the largest photo image files possible.

You can contact VSO President Dan Bieker at: [danbieker@gmail.com](mailto:danbieker@gmail.com)

## Remembering Ned Brinkley, 1965 – 2020



Shock waves reverberated throughout the birding world with news of the recent death of Ned Brinkley while birding in southern Ecuador. Ned was a renowned naturalist, author, and prolific contributor to the VSO, most notably as co-author of the “Gold Book”, a thoroughly researched species by species account of Virginia’s birdlife. Well known as a consultant, tour guide, and expert ornithologist, Ned leaves a legacy beyond compare. Memorials and tributes are plentiful on various social media platforms, and anyone wishing to share their thoughts are encouraged to do so via VSO’s [Facebook](#) page

Some thoughts here from a few longtime VSO friends of Ned’s:

*Brian Patteson* -- As a young birder growing up in Virginia, I was fortunate to follow shortly behind Ned Brinkley, who was three years’ my senior. By the time I was in high school, Ned already had a reputation as an outstanding field birder. I think we met in 1983 at the stakeout Burrowing Owl, but we didn’t start birding together for another couple of years.

Ned was actually my main mentor when it came to pelagic birding, which I took up when I was 18. By then Ned was already a pretty salty veteran of many boat trips, having started at age 13. He had been to Hatteras several times with Bob Ake, who was one of the main organizers of pelagic birding trips at the time. Starting in 1987, Ned and I had many offshore adventures together. One of my fondest

memories was finding the Black-browed Albatross on a trip from Virginia Beach in February 1999. At the time it was the first photographically documented record for the Western North Atlantic!

Our seabird chasing wasn't limited to the ocean either. In September 1996, along with the late Fenton Day and Brian Sullivan, Ned and I had an epic day of birding at Kerr Dam. The biggest highlight was the first Piedmont record of Trindade Petrel. This was just one of many seabirds driven inland by Hurricane Fran. Ned was obsessed with storm birding, and he found many wayward seabirds over the years out at the CBBT, which was one of his favorite birding spots. We birded there many times, and when I look back at some of those days, the birds we saw were just a bonus.

*Brian Taber* -- I was sitting on the Kiptopeke Hawkwatch platform before sunrise when I read the email about Ned Brinkley's passing the day before. It was so unexpected. He was birding in Ecuador, doing what he loved. Ned was an early Board member for the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory and since then has been a long-time Advisor. He coordinated our Kiptopeke Challenge event in the early years.

The Observatory worked with him to print the book, "Shorebirds of Chincoteague," in which he edited the surveys of Claudia Wilds. He also helped with our Eastern Shore butterfly counts. I was always in awe of his knowledge. We are so proud to be associated with him. Ned was a world-class friend to all. Rest in peace.



*Bill Williams* -- Every serious birder marveled at Edward S. (Ned) Brinkley's capacity to be on hand for what seemed like every state bird. It was as if he intuited a bird's arrival time and location. His presence was, for many, a necessary affirmation for twitching the rarity. That acknowledgement of Ned's superior stature within the birding community reflected the deep respect he earned with his field skills and his tireless efforts to verify ornithological records through as much definitive detail, technical accuracy and context as possible.

Ever the gifted *deipnosophist* (Look it up; he would love it if you did!) Ned eloquently, often ebulliently, shared with those around him his exceptional diversity of understandings. In that, and in many other ways, he modeled being a mentor, paying it forward as an extension of the nurturing doted on him when he was an enthusiastic, take-it-all-in youngster by Bob Ake, Floy Burford, David Hughes and others.

The chronicle of Ned's impressive accomplishments should stand as a guide for the VSO as it endeavors to strengthen youth engagements for its future. That would be a lasting tribute for all he brought to our avocation.

# A New Phase of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas

*By Sergio Harding, Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist,  
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and Dixie Sommers, VSO Board*

Five years have passed in the blink of an eye! The data collection portion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2), which began in 2016, has successfully concluded in 2020. The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and VSO sincerely thank each and every one of you who have given of your time to collect data for the Atlas, or who have otherwise helped to promote or support the project.

As a result of your collective effort, we have amassed an enormous database of over 5.5 million bird records! No other single survey project in Virginia's history has generated a data set of this magnitude, nor in such a short period of time. Thank you!!!

With data collection now behind us, we are embarking on the next phase of the Atlas, which begins with review and analyses of those data. You all know that our Atlas Coordinator, Dr. Ashley Peele, has done a fantastic job of organizing and running the VABBA2 over the past 5 years. Through funding by DWR, Ashley and her colleagues at the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech (CMI) now get to flex their analytical chops by tackling the Atlas data.

This process begins in January, and we are aiming to have the data thoroughly reviewed and quality controlled by early 2021. The resulting final Atlas dataset will include data collected by field techs through the Atlas point count project, as well as data

generated through breeding bird surveys by natural resource agencies and organizations between 2016 and 2020. DWR will make this final Atlas data publicly available in an online, interactive map format. The final data will form the foundation of subsequent analyses by Ashley, which are projected to be completed by mid-2023.

In the meantime, the three major Atlas partners (DWR, VSO and CMI) have formed a committee to decide on the format and content that will constitute the Atlas final products. The partners will be considering Atlas website and print options and the content of these additional products.

Beyond the data review and analyses to be funded by DWR, the VSO is taking on the primary funding responsibility for the additional Atlas products. VSO will need your support to bring these products to fruition!

Our projected timeline for completion of the Atlas final products is 5 years from now. Consistent communication about the progress of this project is important, and DWR plans on sending out official updates during this time period. The updates will go out via e-mail to all volunteers who contributed data to the Atlas. If you did not collect Atlas data but would like to receive e-mail updates, please subscribe at <https://dwr.virginia.gov/atlas-updates/>. VSO will communicate about its plans and funding needs through this newsletter, our website [www.virginiabirds.org](http://www.virginiabirds.org), and other means.

You can find more information on the new phase of the Atlas, including details of the planned analyses, at [www.virginiabirds.org/vabba2](http://www.virginiabirds.org/vabba2) and [www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/virginia-breeding-bird-atlas](http://www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/birds/virginia-breeding-bird-atlas).



# Recalling a Big Year: VSO Interview with Bob Ake

By Terri Cuthriell

For nearly 50 years Bob Ake has been a dedicated member of VSO, serving in many roles through the years, including that of VSO president. As VARCOM chairman, Bob coordinated the development of an electronic system for the submission and storage of Virginia's rarities. This year he concluded his coordination of Region 12 for the Second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. Additionally, Bob participates in numerous area Christmas Bird Counts including compiling the Nansemond River CBC.

He conducts bird surveys at Back Bay and Great Dismal Swamp NWRs and in previous years Bob surveyed Fisherman's Island NWR. Bob has also led countless state, national, and international field trips for local bird clubs and VSO members. Bob received the Eike Award for outstanding service to VSO in 1984, and in 2018 he received the Myriam Moore Award for at least 25 years of high achievement for VSO.

On top of all that, 2020 is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bob's ABA area Big Year record, observing 731 avian species in Canada and the 49 continental United States, and their coastal waters from January 1 to December 31, 2010. I caught up with Bob on a recent November morning for his routine bird survey along the Great Dismal Swamp NWR Washington Ditch road. It was a perfect birding day and a good opportunity to ask Bob to reflect on his experiences in 2010.

*Terri:* As I read through the blog you wrote almost every evening during your year-long adventure ([bobsbirds.blogspot.com](http://bobsbirds.blogspot.com)), I was struck that you only saw four new life birds during the year. What inspired you to make such an exhausting trip just for four new birds?

*Bob:* The pursuit of record number of bird species during a Big Year is really an obsession. It was both a challenge and very exciting to visit parts of North America that I'd not seen before. John Spahr accompanied me for most of the trips, and we had a very ambitious schedule which necessitated multiple trips (and time zones) across the country and into Alaska and Canada. It certainly required a

lot of stamina and endurance, including dealing with a lot of bad weather. I know it seems crazy, but I can do birdwatching 24-7. The year was worth it all.

However, I do often get asked if I'd do it again, and my answer is no - the expense and time involved made this a once in a lifetime experience for me!

*Terri:* What was your planning process?

*Bob:* I had planned to do a Big Year in 2009, but John Spahr invited me to go to Cuba with him during that year. He said that if I deferred the Big Year until 2010, he'd go with me. So that's what we did.

Prior to 2010, I had a vast experience chasing birds all over the US. During 2009 I put that experience to work building a spreadsheet that showed the best



month to look for each species in a couple of dozen hot spots around the country. Then I put together an itinerary that strung together the optimum time and place to check off each species. Many places had to be visited multiple times to pick up both breeding and wintering species. During the first half of the year, I made advance reservations so that we could keep to the schedule. I set a budget for us and during that first half of the year, I pretty much kept to that budget.

We could have started the year in some exotic place, but I chose to begin in my backyard. The first bird of the Big Year was a Song Sparrow. By the end of New Year's Day, we had 82 species including an Ash-Throated Flycatcher, left over from a local Christmas Count. On January 9, John and I hopped in my Prius and headed out to Texas for our first long trip. This trip included the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) in Texas, one of my favorite spots. The World Birding Center here in the RGV is THE area in the US to see tropical and Mexican species.

We returned to the RGV several times during the year. On that first trip we returned home through Arkansas (Smith's Longspur), St. Louis, MO (Eurasian Tree Sparrow), and Illinois (Greater Prairie Chicken). With a great sense of relief and satisfaction I drove into my driveway on January 24, after 5,500 miles, 14 states, and 267 birds in 16 days.

A late January trip to the South Florida (Masked Duck, but no La Sagra's Flycatcher) was followed by a Cape Hatteras pelagic trip (winter alcids, Great Skua), and then our first Arizona trip (Rufous-back Robin). Later in February, it was off to California, where I grabbed my first life bird for the year, an Island Scrub-Jay on Santa Cruz Island and we took a couple of pelagic trips. In May we traveled with our wives to Alaska for a month visiting the Pribilofs, Denali, St. Lawrence Island, and Nome (Bristle-thighed Curlew, second lifer).

*Terri:* You had originally set 650 species as your goal for the year. But you reached that goal in Michigan on July 1 (Yellow-bellied Flycatcher). How did that change your plans?

*Bob:* With the stated goal in hand and half the year left, I decided to spend the last half of the year chasing rarities and try to reach the coveted goal of 700 species. The consequence of that decision is that I could no longer rely on a fixed plan, since you

don't know when and where to expect rarities to show up. And that consequence tripled the expenses since it now became mandatory to fly everywhere.

*Terri:* What was your best bird during the year?

*Bob:* Without a doubt it was the Blyth's Reed Warbler I found at Gambell, Alaska on September 9 for a first North American record of that Old World species. The sighting was published in North American Birds. Never in my wildest dreams did I expect to find a new record during the Big Year.

*Terri:* Your third life bird was a pelagic bird, the Hawaiian Petrel. Did you take many pelagic trips?

*Bob:* Yes, I did. I spent 28 days at sea on the Atlantic, Pacific, the Gulf of Mexico, and off Alaska. I've been a lover of pelagic birds since before I arrived in Virginia. Even though I get sick occasionally, I continue to return to them for their excitement. The Hawaiian Petrel was seen out of Fort Bragg, CA, August 15.



*Laysan Albatross, Half Moon Bay Pelagic, September 2010*

*Terri:* Reading through your account, I had never heard of the Himalayan Snowcock, a striking Asian species transplanted into Nevada for hunting purposes. You saw this bird in August, and it was your fourth and final life bird for the year. Can you tell me about how you were able to see this bird?

*Bob:* John and I made a trip to Nevada in June to find the snowcock in the Ruby Mountains near Elko. It's a beautiful area and in June there was still snow on the ground. It's a bit of a hike up to a plateau with a mountain lake. We didn't have any success with the snowcock but vowed to return. We did return in August, climbed the same trail with no snow, and heard birds calling when we reached the plateau. A



Montezuma Quail, near Portal, Arizona, July 2010

short time later two birds flew past us. Very impressive. Some birders have chased these birds in a helicopter rented in Elko that skirts the cirque where we found them. Although that sounds exciting, I think our approach was better.

*Terri:* What was your last new bird for the year?

*Bob:* A Black-vented Oriole in Bentsen State Park along the Rio Grande in southern Texas on Christmas Day.

*Terri:* How did your wife take to your Big Year?

*Bob:* She was very supportive. I was actually home in my bed about 30% of the nights during the year. When things settled down after the end of the year, we took a wonderful trip together to Paris which we both enjoyed very much. Good restaurants, museums, nice walks, and no birding.

*Terri:* Doing a big year was a monumental effort as you have described. What birding goals did you set after 2010?

*Bob:* **6,000 world species** – The Abyssinian Roller was #6000, which I got on November 18, 2019 in Mole National Park, Ghana.

**800 ABA Area species** – Golden-winged Warbler was #800 on November 18, 2018 at Frontera Audubon thicket in Weslaco, TX.

**At least one species in each of the 250 avian families of the world** – I still need nine more families – 2 in Africa, 5 in Australia, and 1 in Sulawesi. I'll need some respite from the global pandemic to help me with this last big goal!

*Terri:* So, on this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of your Big Year, looking back and forward what are your hopes for VSO?

*Bob:* I'm a big fan and supporter of our atlas project, VABBA2. I'm really looking forward to seeing the product of all that effort. I am also proud of the VSO's effort to push for the conservation of Virginia's birds. It's a never-ending battle.

We thank Bob for all his efforts for VSO and wish him success getting those last nine avian families – hopefully all those “goodie” birds will cooperate and allow him to achieve this desire in a more leisurely way than he experienced birding in 2010!

### VSO Supports Youth at CVWO

The Kiptopeke Challenge is Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory's annual big birding day that also doubles as its main fundraising event to support its mission of protecting wildlife through field research, education, and habitat conservation. Each year teams select a category in which they want to participate: 24-hour, 3-hour, Special Venue, or Youth.

This year VSO used its annual donation of \$250 to support the fundraising efforts of a youth team. The team raising the most funds receives the bronze Piping Plover trophy. We hope this incentive will encourage greater participation by youth in this birding event. In the event of multiple youth teams, the team with the most species would garner this donation assistance. Because of COVID-19, teams of one were allowed this year.

The 2020 team securing this year's assistance is team C'ville Cerulean, and the team member is Conor Farrell. VSO congratulates Conor and will donate \$250 to CVWO on behalf of team C'ville Cerulean.

# House Bill 1727 Trap, Neuter and Release of Feral Cats is a Threat to Birds and Wildlife

By Terri Cuthriell

House Bill 1727 Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) of Cats, will be presented during the 2021 Virginia General Assembly and could be enacted into law in 2021. It is critical that individuals in the conservation community oppose this bill by making our legislators aware of the danger that legalizing TNR would present to birds, other wildlife, and ecosystems. HB1727 is intended to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section allowing Trap, Neuter, and Return (TNR) of stray and feral cats in Virginia.

VSO is strongly opposed to TNR and HB1727, since cats take an immense toll on wildlife and birds. Because feral and outdoor cat populations are so high, they are one of the most devastating anthropogenic causes of bird mortality. It has been [determined](#) that 2.4 billion birds are killed by cats each year in the US, making this the number one mortality risk birds face everywhere cats roam freely.

Feral cats are invasive predatory animals that kill birds for sustenance, but even well-fed cats routinely kill birds in the areas where they roam. Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) are not part of the natural world anywhere and are [responsible for numerous extinctions](#) of mammals, reptiles, and birds worldwide.

In areas like Virginia, resident and migratory birds such as our state bird, the Northern Cardinal, the steeply declining Wood Thrush, and many other species have no natural predators similar to the domestic cat, so they are especially ill-suited to avoid attacks by cats.

In addition, cats kept outside are subject to becoming infected with rabies and toxoplasmosis (a disease of threat to humans, especially pregnant women and those with compromised immune systems) making outdoor cats a public health concern.

Those who support TNR propound the idea that TNR is a humane way to manage stray and feral cats. However, many wildlife conservation groups, veterinary organizations, and animal rights

advocates object to TNR because it is *inhumane*, exposing cats and wildlife to abuse, disease and trauma. TNR has been proven ineffective at controlling feral cat populations; indeed the feeding of stray cats may increase populations of cats, yet the program continues to be promoted by cat activists.

HB1727 would further magnify animal welfare concerns because it would directly conflict with the current Virginia Code including § 3.2-6504, "Abandonment of animal; penalty," which states, "No person shall abandon or dump any animal. Violation of this section is a Class 1 misdemeanor."

Additionally, the practice of releasing cats is contrary to the mandate of state agencies like the Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation that exist to protect wildlife and natural environments. The adoption of HB1727 into law would cause an additional burden on wildlife and wildland managers.

Many ornithological, wildlife, and animal rights organizations have taken a stand, denouncing TNR and advocating that all cats be kept indoors. Please refer to the American Bird Conservancy website concerning [cats and other invasive species](#).

**Please make your opinion heard this month by asking your state legislators to reject HB1727 and TNR. You can find your state legislators [here](#):**

Read about HB1727 [here](#):

Questions? Contact Terri at [virginiabirdconservation@gmail.com](mailto:virginiabirdconservation@gmail.com)



# NOMINATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FOR VSO AWARDS, GRANTS AND FIELD SCHOLARSHIP

VSO is soliciting nominations for the 2021 Murray Award and applications for the VSO Conservation Grant and the VSO Field Ornithology Scholarship.

## **VSO Murray Award, \$1000**

The Murray Award was established in 1980 to honor the Rev. J. J. Murray, Sr., a charter member of the VSO and the editor of its journal, *The Raven*, from its inception until 1969. The aim of the award is to promote graduate and under-graduate research consisting of current or projected field studies on Virginia birds. The VSO Board of Directors has budgeted \$2,000 annually to support two proposals. Proposals are judged for their scientific merit and the likelihood that the work will make a meaningful contribution to our understanding of Virginia avifauna.

Upon completion of the research, the recipient will be asked to present the results at a VSO annual meeting held in May and are encouraged to publish the results in an appropriate journal. The recipient will also be awarded a one-year membership in the VSO.

Applicants must submit the following materials by **January 31, 2021** as a PDF file:

1. Proposal of ≤ 5 pages including background, objectives/hypotheses, methods, expected results, and benefits to VA birds. Citations should be included in the 5 pages.
2. Budget describing how the VSO funds will be used along with any other funding already acquired to carry out the project.
3. Name of the institution and department they are enrolled in, the degree they are working towards, and the name of their research advisor.

Applicants should also have their advisor send a letter of recommendation separately that, at a minimum, verifies the applicant is a student in good standing and is receiving the advisor's support for the proposed project. Inclusion of additional information about the applicant is also helpful and will be considered by the reviewers.

Applicants will be notified of the results by mid-March, 2020. Please send proposals or requests for

information to Lesley Bulluck, Center for Environmental Studies, VCU, [lpbulluck@vcu.edu](mailto:lpbulluck@vcu.edu)

## **VSO Conservation Grant, \$500-\$1000**

The VSO Board established the Conservation Fund (originally named the Small Grants Conservation Fund) in March 2007. The VSO Conservation Committee manages the fund. Every year, the Virginia Society of Ornithology awards conservation grants to worthy candidates conducting research in the field of bird conservation with potential benefits to Virginia species and habitats. The VSO Board of Directors has budgeted \$2,500 annually. Awards are usually \$500, \$1,000 or occasionally more, and the Conservation Committee determines the amount.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a request in writing to the Conservation Committee Chair. Each application should include:

1. A one- to two-page research proposal describing how the proposed work will lead to improved conservation of Virginia's avifauna and/or its habitat
2. Requested funding level
3. Detailed budget for requested funding

The Conservation Committee will consider each application and confer with the entire Board of the VSO. We ask that recipients report their findings to the VSO board and members at the completion of their project, traditionally at the VSO Annual Meeting in May.

DEADLINE for 2021 application: **JANUARY 31, 2021**. The committee will notify the applicant(s) around February 15.

Please submit your application to Patti Reum (Conservation Chair) at [pareum@gmail.com](mailto:pareum@gmail.com).

## **VSO Field Ornithology Scholarship, \$500**

The VSO would like to annually support one student to participate in a formal training/workshop to gain field ornithology skills (i.e., mist-netting, banding, etc.). Applicants need to submit the following materials by January 31, 2021 (a) description of the workshop they hope to attend, including a web link to the opportunity if one exists), (b) description of

why the student needs to gain these skills, and (c) a brief budget of expected expenses. Students working with a faculty member to carry out a specific project to benefit Virginia birds will be given priority. Applicants will be notified of the

results by early March 2021. Please send proposals or requests for information by **January 31** to Lesley Bulluck, Center for Environmental Studies, VCU, [lpbulluck@vcu.edu](mailto:lpbulluck@vcu.edu)

## VSO Field Trips 2021

In planning future VSO field trips during the pandemic, we put safety first. Since a vaccine will probably not be widely available until second quarter, we have made the following decisions:



**Outer Banks Trip:** This trip for February 5-7, 2021 is CANCELLED. For those who may want to explore on your own during those dates, host hotel Comfort Inn South has agreed to hold 10 ocean-side (\$76/night) and 5 sound-side (\$62/night) rooms at the special VSO rate. These rooms will be released January 4, 2021. Hotel #: 252-441-6315

One of the weekend highlights is always the presentation made by Jerry Via on Friday evening to kick things off. Since we won't be meeting in person, Jerry has graciously agreed to make a presentation via Zoom. Stay tuned for details about date and time!

For 2022, we've booked February 4-6 with the Comfort Inn South.

**Summer Trips:** At this time we have not scheduled trips for Piney Grove in late May or for a weekend in June. We'll update our plans as we learn more about the timing of vaccine availability.

**Chincoteague Trip:** We've booked the Refuge Inn for September 10-12, 2021 and are very hopeful about this weekend!

If you have any questions about VSO field trips, please contact Meredith Bell at [merandlee@gmail.com](mailto:merandlee@gmail.com) or (804) 824-4958.

### VSO Supports Black and Latinx Birders Scholarship

The VSO Board has voted to join with partners in Maryland, DC, and Delaware to support the Annual Black & Latinx Birders Scholarship.

This new scholarship seeks to increase the number of Black and Latinx birders studying in the fields of environmental science or the biological sciences. Scholarship awards range from a minimum of \$2,500 to a maximum of \$5,000, depending on funding for the current year. It is open to DC, Maryland, Virginia and Delaware students of any age, in any year of their college studies (full-time undergraduate).

For the coming year, VSO committed \$500 toward the scholarship and will promote the scholarship through the VSO newsletter and website to attract potential birders/applicants in Virginia.

In supporting the scholarship, VSO joins the Maryland, DC and Delaware Ornithological Societies, the Audubon Naturalist Society, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, and the Maryland Bird Conservation Partnership. More details can be found at <https://marylandbirds.org/grants>.

# NOW IS THE TIME TO RENEW YOUR VSO MEMBERSHIP FOR 2021!

By Shirley Devan, VSO Membership Secretary

Since early November, many VSO members have renewed their membership for 2021. THANKS SO MUCH!

But...there are still several hundred of you who need to renew for 2021, and we want to hear from you. **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 back of this newsletter or renew online (safely and easily with your debit or credit card or PayPal account) at the VSO website: [www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate](http://www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate)

The VSO is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, so your 2021 membership dues and any donations are tax deductible in 2020 if you pay before January 1.

With your membership you'll receive the VSO's publications and be able to attend the VSO's Field Trips at no charge. And we are planning field trips for the second half of 2021.

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

**Virginia's Second Breeding Bird Atlas (VABBA2) is now moving into 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.

## New VSO Members since August 2020

Michael Myers, Leesburg  
 Tim Anderson, Fredericksburg  
 Dolly Frazier, Port Republic  
 Mukund Belliappa, Washington, DC  
 Arthur Strauss, Irvine, CA  
 Matthew Pratt, Alexandria  
 Jennifer Sweeney, Potomac Falls  
 Stephen Keith, VA Beach  
 Cheryl Dybas, Falls Church  
 Helen Dubois, Washington, DC  
 Michael Academia, Williamsburg  
 Kathleen Tanis, Edinburg

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!

PS: Many thanks to those who have already renewed their membership for 2020! Your early dues and donations are much appreciated by your "volunteer" Membership Secretary.

VSO OFFICERS	VSO BOARD OF DIRECTORS	
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## 2021 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 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Contributing Membership \$60 \_\_\_\_\_ Active Membership \$20  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sustaining Membership \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ Student Membership \$10  
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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>

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR CHECK, PAYABLE TO THE VSO:

VSO, PO BOX 5994, WILLIAMSBURG, VA 23188-5994

You may also join, renew and purchase items online at:  
[www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate](http://www.virginiabirds.org/membership-and-donate)

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

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

*The Virginia Society of Ornithology is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All membership fees, donations, and contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.*