



# Audubon IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Winter 2009

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The Virginia IBA program exists to identify and conserve the places in Virginia most critical to birds. This newsletter will help to keep you abreast of what's happening with bird conservation in Virginia and can serve as your outlet for discovering volunteer activities that will benefit birds and other wildlife. In this issue, you'll learn about how you can help to collect data on IBAs; attend TogetherGreen Volunteer Days events around the state; and learn about landowners that have been honored for their land conservation practices. Successful bird and land conservation in Virginia depends on you!



## Globally Prioritized IBA Sites in Virginia!

Four Important Bird Areas in Virginia have recently been prioritized as Globally Significant by the National IBA Technical Review Committee:

1. Delmarva Bayside Marshes
2. Great Dismal Swamp
3. Pamunkey and Mattaponi Rivers, and
4. Upper Blue Ridge Mountains.

These four globally significant IBAs join two that were prioritized last year: the Virginia Barrier Islands/Lagoon System, and the Lower Rappahannock Rivers.

These six sites are now recognized as globally significant to bird conservation.

Still in review by the national committee: Allegheny Highlands, Lower Potomac River, and Piney Grove. For more information go to: <http://www.audubon.org/bird/IBA/criteria.html>

The Virginia IBA Program has received a conservation grant from the Virginia Society of Ornithology to help with outreach to local governments and data collection and entry regarding the global prioritization process.

Thank you VSO!



# THE VIEW FROM MY PERCH

BY MARY ELFNER, Virginia IBA Coordinator

Two interns have joined us to help Virginia IBA with outreach, event, and technical support. They are Mary-Stuart Torbeck, who has been working as the TogetherGreen Volunteer Days Event Coordinator, and David Bryan, who will be joining us soon to help implement a program to incorporate IBAs into county planning comprehensive plan updates. We are very glad to have both Mary-Stuart and David providing new energy and support for bird conservation in Virginia!



Mary A. Elfner



## An Evening with John James Audubon at the Library of Virginia

Many thanks to Dominion for their generous support and sponsorship of this event!



Caroline Coe



Frank Grier, John Coe, Marjorie Grier and Caroline Coe



Nini and Peter Frey, and Ann Biraben



Mary Beth McIntire



Betty Byrne Ware and John Coe



Lyman Davenport and Carole Bradley



Laura McKay, Steve Roble and Greg Butcher



Greg Butcher, Tom Bancroft and John Cecil



Guests enjoying the Rusty Blackbird print



Tom Camden and Jan Hathcock with the Bald Eagle print

# CONSERVATION NEWS

## IBA Data— A Call For Help!

Rusty Blackbird by Jim Staaz



The challenge of any IBA program is data collection. How does one staff person responsible for an entire state collect good quality data? By working with partners! There are many ways you can continue helping this effort. One specific method we are working on now is to form an IBA based portal on Virginia eBird to post IBA specific data. We hope to have this up-and-running by the end of the year and are working out the process now. We will let you know when this process is completed and give you instructions, if necessary, on how to use it. Another method

for data collection could be through the Virginia Bird listserve. All species are important and serve a purpose, but in order to stay focused, here is a list of 12 high-priority species that could trigger global IBA status in proper numbers:

1. Northern Bobwhite
2. Black Rail
3. Piping Plover
4. Red-cockaded Woodpecker
5. Red-headed Woodpecker
6. Bicknell's Thrush
7. Cerulean Warbler
8. Golden-winged Warbler
9. Bachman's Sparrow
10. Henslow's Sparrow
11. Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow
12. Rusty Blackbird

If you find any of these species on a Virginia IBA, please report it to me, and post it to the Virginia Bird listserve. Helpful information includes date, species number, adults only, breeding pairs, females only, males only, individuals, nests, etc. The more detailed information you can give the better.

Thank you for your interest in supporting the Virginia IBA program and I look forward to hearing from you!

## The Rusty Blackbird Winter Hot Spot Blitz

By Sergio Harding, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Here in Virginia the Rusty Blackbird has been identified as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the state's Wildlife Action Plan, published in 2005 by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF).

The Blitz will take place February 7-15, 2009. It is during this time of year that the wintering population is more sedentary and that males are more vocal, making these elusive birds easier to find. We are asking for volunteer birders to survey for Rusty Blackbirds in any locations and habitats that you feel are potentially suitable for wintering rusties, including known locations, and particularly for flocks or concentrations. You may look for rusties wherever you like, whenever you like, and as often as you like anytime during this period. We simply ask that you submit your observations through Virginia eBird, so that rangewide observations resulting from the Blitz may be analyzed together. If you are not familiar with eBird, signing up is easy, and you can find instructions on using eBird through an online tutorial at <http://ebird.org/content/va/about/tutorial>.

Please look for further information to appear in the near future on the Virginia eBird page (<http://ebird.org/content/va>) and on the VA-Bird listserve. More information on the ecology of the Rusty Blackbird and the potential causes of its decline can be found on the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's website ([http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty\\_Blackbird](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/Research/Rusty_Blackbird)).

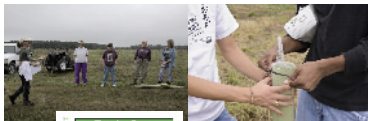
Your efforts will help to improve our understanding of Rusty Blackbird distribution and ecology here in Virginia and across its broader wintering range. Please consider participating in this important event and remember to save the dates!

# OUTREACH NEWS

## TogetherGreen Volunteer Days Events

Recently, Toyota Corporation gave The National Audubon Society a grant to begin the TogetherGreen Program. One component of TogetherGreen is called Volunteer Days. *The Virginia IBA program is one of forty-one grant recipients to receive funding to hold six volunteer events over the course of the next year.* Our partners in this program are the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

### *Three Events Took Place on Saturday, September 27, 2008, to Correspond with National Public Lands Day:*



Photographs by Linda Warriner



Help reforest the Wellford Tract of the Rappahannock River Valley NWR. 10,000 native hardwood trees were planted with tree tubes, many of which need to be replaced in order to prevent entrapment and mortality of birds. Check each tube and remove dead trees so that new ones can be planted.



Photographs by Charles Spaulding



Please join us for an important TogetherGreen event. Volunteers are needed to collect recyclable and non-recyclable manmade materials from forests and marshy shorelines adjacent to Powell Creek. Dog wood trees will be planted along disturbed forest edges to encourage attraction of wildlife.



Trumbo Hollow on the Appalachian Trail in the Upper Blue Ridge Mountains IBA

Three more events will be held in April 2009. If you are interested in taking part in these spring events, please contact the Virginia IBA office at (804) 788-7660.

## Landowner Excellency Awards



Meriwether Payne and Ruth Acra at the Eastern Shore Birding & Nature Festival.

On Friday, September 19, 2008, at the Eastern Shore Birding and Nature Festival, several members of the Payne family were honored with Landowner Excellency Awards from the Virginia IBA program for their work in protecting land on Virginia's eastern shore and within the Virginia Barrier Island and Lagoon System IBA.

The picture to the left shows Meriwether Payne and Ruth Acra receiving awards for their family's work in protecting land along Finney and Nickawampus Creeks in Accomack County.

According to Mr. Lee Payne, their father:

“the Payne family acquired a cottage on this isolated and unsettled estuary almost 50 years ago, and soon realized its extraordinary character. Throughout the intervening years, we deliberately set out to acquire other adjacent land parcels and reposition them in friendly hands for ultimate conservation purposes. Needless to say, each of the five or six transactions took time with quite a story attached. At this time, the entire creek front has conservation easements for permanent protection. Three generations of our family wholeheartedly support this effort and we are all proud of the result!”

**HELP SUPPORT THE VIRGINIA IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS PROGRAM—**  
Visit our new online giving page at

<https://loon.audubon.org/payment/donate/VAIBA.html>

# THANK YOU!

It takes all kinds of support to run the Virginia IBA program. We would like to make special mention to the groups below for their generous support:



## 2003 VIRGINIA COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRANT

Project Title: Synthesizing Information for the Virginia Important Bird Area Program: Phase II Western Shore to Fall Line

## 2004 VIRGINIA COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GRANT

Project Title: Synthesizing Information for the Virginia Important Bird Area Program: Phase I – Eastern Shore and Southern Tidewater

*These grants were awarded to the Center for Conservation Biology, strong supporters of the Virginia IBA Program.*



The Virginia Important Bird Areas program is grateful to the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for this years funding to implement the Virginia Important Bird Areas program. This grant is for:

- Restoring and conserving private lands within Virginia's Important Bird Areas (IBA);
- Engaging local communities in conservation efforts within IBAs; and
- Incorporating IBAs into county planning decisions.



The Virginia IBA program is grateful to Dominion for their generous support of the Virginia Important Bird Areas program. The above images show Pamela Faggert, Chief Environmental Officer, Bill Hall, Foundation President, and Mary Elfner, Virginia IBA Coordinator, enjoying the bird life found on the James River next to Dominion's Tredegar Campus.

Thank you to the August Bird Club and the Richmond Audubon Society for their donations to support the Virginia IBA Program!



**Richmond Audubon Society**

# PRIVATE LANDOWNER INITIATIVE

## State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) In the Culpeper Basin IBA

The landscape recognized by the National Audubon Society as the Culpeper Basin Important Bird Area, which once supported an abundance of grassland bird species, has been transformed by centuries of human activities into a mosaic of farms, fields, and scattered secondary woodlots of oaks, hickories, and Virginia pine. Consequently, government agencies and private conservation organizations are working together to plant native trees, shrubs, and warm season grasses on 1,000 acres of retired cropland to restore grass and shrubland habitats along the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, as well as upland habitat along their tributaries. Partners include the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Farm Service Agency, the Piedmont Environmental Council, and the National Audubon Society. Restored areas will link quality habitats together into a diverse wildlife corridor, creating a mosaic of habitats in various stages of succession to provide nesting sites, food, and cover for Bobwhite Quail, Loggerhead Shrike, Field Sparrow, and Prairie Warbler and imperiled grassland species such as the Barn Owl, Eastern Meadowlark, Henslow's Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, and Grasshopper Sparrow.



### How to Participate

#### **Eligibility:**

Through the local USDA office, farmers can enroll land for 10-15 year contracts provided they meet the following requirements:

- The land has a cropping history of four to six years from 1996 to 2001. This does not include marginal pasture land.
- The land is within the Culpeper Basin Important Bird Area (see map) and is appropriate for the proposed management practices.
- Practices used and habitats created must be managed during the life of the contract.

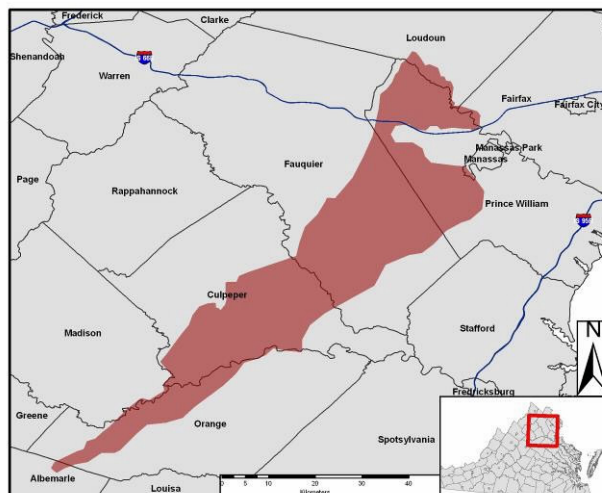
#### **Landowner Benefits:**

USDA may provide the following benefits to participating landowners:

- An up-front, one-time payment of \$100 per acre, which is made after the contract is approved.
- A practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40% of the eligible habitat installation costs.

#### **Contact:**

Mary A. Elfner,  
Virginia IBA Coordinator  
(804) 788-7660  
melfner@audubon.org.



# HOW YOU CAN HELP!

## Adopt An IBA

According to Virginia IBA records, three groups have adopted three IBAs in Virginia:

1. Richmond Audubon Society has adopted the Lower James River IBA
2. New River Valley Bird Club has adopted the Radford Army Ammunition Plant IBA
3. The Monticello and Augusta Bird Clubs have adopted the Upper Blue Ridge Mountains IBA

What does it take to adopt an IBA? A willingness to work with partners to help these special places critical to bird survival in Virginia. Here are some procedures that you can follow:

### **Adoption Procedures**

- ⇒ Select an IBA site near you for adoption.
- ⇒ Identify an individual from your group to act as the main contact.
- ⇒ Have a designated group member fill out the simple adoption form and return to the Virginia IBA Coordinator.
- ⇒ Work with the IBA coordinator to get permission from appropriate landowners and help to form collaborative partnerships that will benefit species or habitats within the IBA.
- ⇒ Schedule a meeting to sit down with the IBA Coordinator to develop a site-specific program that is realistic for your group using the Adoption Form as a guide. The IBA Coordinator will provide any necessary assistance in establishing methodology, training, and data forms.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Virginia IBA office at (804) 788-7660, or send an e-mail to [melfner@audubon.org](mailto:melfner@audubon.org).

## NAME THAT AVE!

*If you can name this bird, email your answer by January 31 to Mary Elfner at : [melfner@audubon.org](mailto:melfner@audubon.org) with "IBA Bird Contest" in the Subject line.*

*We'll randomly draw from all the correct answers and if you're the lucky winner, you'll receive free Audubon prizes! We'll email out the correct answer after the drawing... Good luck!*

