

# THE RIVER RUNS

News from the Cowpasture River Preservation Association

## **Range-wide Study on Rare Songbird Touches Down in the Allegheny Highlands**

*By Laurel Schablein, Conservation Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy*

One of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s rarest songbirds, the Golden-winged Warbler (GWWA), has a population stronghold in Bath and Highland counties. Long sought after by birders, this diminutive species is now the subject of an international study funded by the National Science Foundation. Dr. Henry Streby, UC-Berkeley Postdoctoral Research Fellow, is leading the effort to better understand the range-wide long distance migration of GWWAs, as well as Blue-winged Warblers and hybrids between the two species.



The ‘light-level’ locators (above) track movements between wintering and breeding grounds by calculating the individual’s position using sunrise and sunset times. Each weighs only 0.45 gram.

These days, most animal migration studies employ real-time satellite tracking, but GWWAs are too small to carry even the lightest transmitters. However, recent advances in miniature archival “light-level” loggers called geolocators have offered a solution to tracking birds weighing in at only 8-10 grams (you could mail three with a postage stamp). Dr. Streby’s team initiated deployment of over 400 geolocators across the species’ entire breeding range, visiting 20 sites and working with many collaborators throughout the country.



GWWA shown in the photo was tagged at Chimney Run Farm, owned by Lee Elliott and Bill Jones, a CRPA Board member.

Here in the Commonwealth, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and The Nature Conservancy partnered with Dr. Lesley Bulluck and

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to capture and “tag” GWWAs in the Allegheny Highlands, including sites in or near the Cowpasture River watershed. At one site, Chimney Run Farm, owned by Lee Elliott and CRPA Board member Bill Jones, the VCU crew deployed geolocators on four male GWWAs. Within two

weeks they had deployed 25 geolocators across both counties, including two on Brewster hybrids. GWWA males show strong fidelity to their breeding sites, and after wintering somewhere in the tropics later this year, the birds will return to be recaptured next spring, their geolocators removed, and the data downloaded. From that data, Dr. Streby’s team will be able to determine more



Drs. Bulluck’s and Streby’s crews at Chimney Run.

specifically where the individual birds spent their winter. This information is critical for land managers linking full life cycle conservation actions for this species on both their breeding and wintering grounds.

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## Member Spotlight

### Welcome Dale Perry

#### Where are you from?

I was born and raised in Clifton Forge, with family still there. I left the area to work at Newport News Shipbuilding almost 30 years ago. When I retire from the Shipyard I will be moving back home.

#### What is your connection with the Cowpasture River or area?

Having grown up in Clifton Forge I spent many a day and night fishing, paddling, tubing and just enjoying the Cowpasture. With friends and family having property and camps along the river I always had access. It is a treat when I get a trip home and get to spend a little time on the Cowpasture.

#### Why did you join the CRPA?

I finally found a piece of property to purchase on the Cowpasture in 2012, fulfilling a lifelong dream. My next goal is to build a new camp on the property. It is in the Griffith area. My best friend and his family gave me a membership for my birthday. Owning property on the river means taking responsibility for it, and being a member of CRPA helps achieve the need to keep the river clean and pristine. I want to see the river stay this way.



## Upcoming Events



Members at the spring Walton Tract Clean Up: (front row) Bucky Wells (Potomac Hunt Club), Dale Perry, Lisa Beckstrom; (back row) Dave Peters, Marek Smith, Joe Wood.

**-CRPA Picnic/Family Fun Day** will be held on Saturday, August 1, 2015 at Lynchburg Camp. Details and registration information are listed on page 6 of this newsletter and at <http://www.cowpastureriver.org/events>.

**-Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Training** event will be held on Saturday, August 8, 2015 (rain date is Saturday, August 15, 2015). This training is a collaborative effort with Virginia Save our Streams (VA SOS) and the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) and will help certify some of our current monitors through the VA SOS program and also provide an opportunity for any members interested in getting involved with our monitoring program to learn more! **Limited spots are available for this free training.** Please contact Lisa at [directorcrpa@gmail.com](mailto:directorcrpa@gmail.com) or 704-930-8243 to register.

**-2015 Mid-Atlantic Volunteer Monitoring Conference *Bridging the Water Quality Data Gap*** will be held from August 6-8, 2015 at the Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA. Information about this conference can be found at <https://vcwq.wordpress.com/>.

**-Walton Tract Clean Up**, Saturday, October 24. If you are interested in helping out with this, please contact Lisa at [directorcrpa@gmail.com](mailto:directorcrpa@gmail.com) or 704-930-8243.



# Thank You To Our Loyal Watershed Members

Includes dues and gifts received between November 1, 2014 and July 1, 2015. If you don't see your name listed, it is time to send in your dues. Thanks for your continued support and welcome to our new members. **Bold** = dues/gifts since last issue.

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**Everette Mays, Jr.**  
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**In Memory of:**  
**Garnett Bailey Moneymaker**  
**Martha Ruggles**



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- >\$500 Bedrock Patron
- Junior Membership(s): 15 years and under; Cost = 4 hrs./year volunteer service

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- I prefer not to have my name published as a contributor.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer river monitor.
- I want to help save valuable resources, please send my newsletter by email.