



Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 2019 SUMMARY

VABBA2 Year Four: Field Season Report

Cumulative Metrics:

- 1,255 contributors
- 60,000 birding hours logged
- 40% block completion
- 516,000 breeding codes reported
- 4.4 million birds reported

VABBA2 Cumulative Block Effort 2019

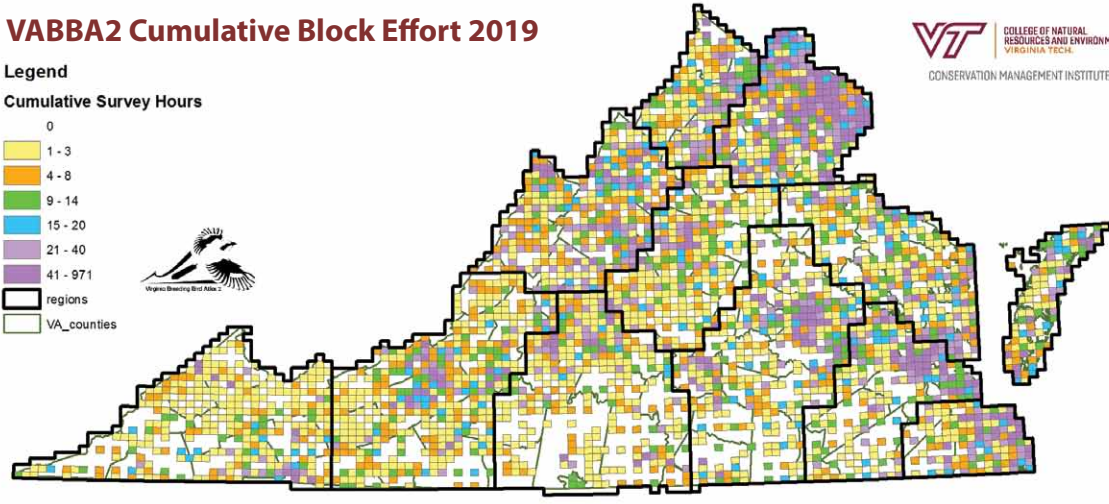
Legend

Cumulative Survey Hours

- 0
- 1 - 3
- 4 - 8
- 9 - 14
- 15 - 20
- 21 - 40
- 41 - 971

regions

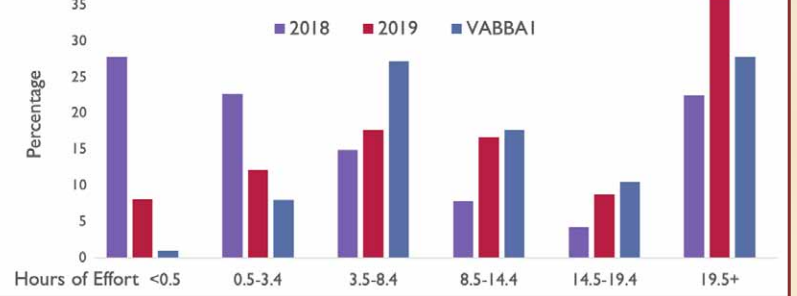
VA_counties



Filling the gaps in statewide block coverage

- This map illustrates the cumulative statewide effort by volunteers since 2016, which is shown as hours per block.
- Relative to past years, significantly more effort was logged in the rural regions of the state, e.g. the central and southern Piedmont as well as southwest Virginia.
- Increased volunteer birding in rural parts of the state helped to significantly reduce the 'white space' or areas with zero breeding bird observations across the state.

Volunteer Effort Over Time



Huge jump in Atlas priority block coverage in 2019!

- This graph shows how volunteer effort in priority blocks increased from 2018 (purple) to 2019 (red) and how this compares to VABBA1 (blue).
- In one year, volunteers reduced the number of priority blocks with less than 30 minutes survey time from 27% to 7%!
- The project blasted past VABBA1's % of blocks with 20+ hours!



Species Highlights

This year we asked volunteers to make a special effort to bird open habitats of southern Virginia. As a result of volunteer efforts...

- Yellow-breasted Chat and Northern Bobwhite detections up by nearly 50% in 2019
- Detections of Prairie Warbler, Blue Grosbeak, and Grasshopper Sparrow also increased this year.

Winter Wren was officially confirmed as a VA breeder!

- While surveying in a high-elevation spruce forest on Whitetop Mountain in the Mt. Rogers National Recreation area, ornithologist Dr. Steven Hopp and (Blue Ridge Discovery Center) intern Cade

Campbell, found a family of Winter Wrens that included at least two recent fledglings.

- This confirmation is satisfying for volunteers who listened to the Winter Wrens' songs echoing through the mountains of western Virginia for the past three summers, without being able to find their breeding territories.
- This same checklist confirmed Brown Creeper and provided a probable code for Canada Warbler, so if you needed any further encouragement to visit southwest Virginia this summer, check out more of the Whitetop mountain records!

Blockbusting in 2019

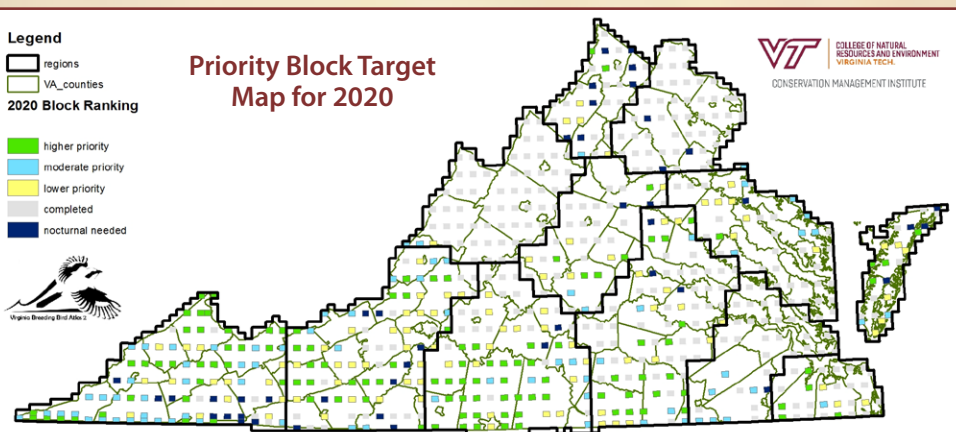
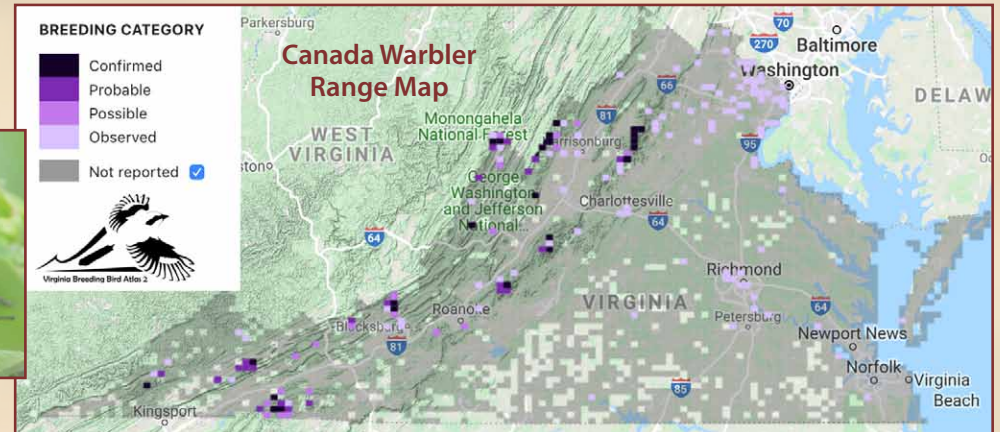
- In the fourth field season, we asked volunteers to participate in blockbusting, a blitz-style of surveying focused on collecting data in remote priority blocks.
- Independent blockbusters** chose target blocks in the southern Piedmont, Northern Neck, and western mountains to survey over multiple visits.
- Their efforts knocked out over a dozen important priority blocks, logging an average of 67 species per block and many new nocturnal species reports.
- Blockbusting Rallies** – Over 50 Atlas volunteers participated in summer blockbusting rallies, which targeted under-birded areas of south-central and southwest Virginia.
- Thanks to incredible energy and enthusiasm during these events, volunteers surveyed 76 new priority blocks, added several thousand new breeding codes, AND racked up many great nocturnal species.
- Birders traveled from Maryland, NoVA, Richmond, Charlottesville, Lexington, and many points in between to participate in these important weekend blitzes near Natural Tunnel, Staunton River, Hungry Mother, and Twin Lakes State Parks.
- Stay tuned for next year's list of Atlas rally dates and locations!



Species Focus for 2020: Birds of the Mountain-Valley Region

- Preliminary Atlas data suggest that the distribution of high-elevation songbird species, e.g. Canada and Black-throated Blue Warbler, may have increased since VABBA1.
- The current Canada Warbler distribution map illustrates where this species has been confirmed breeding so far, but More survey coverage is needed specifically in southwestern Virginia to fully understand the current status of montane-breeding birds.
- To fully understand the current status of montane-breeding songbirds, more survey coverage is needed in southwestern Virginia.

Note: These block targets may change slightly after blocks are assigned to summer field technicians. Stay tuned for the official 2020 Volunteer Blockbusting map coming soon.



Goals for the Final Field Season in 2020...

- Fill the Gaps** – volunteers able to travel can help the project by focusing their birding time in higher ranking priority blocks (shown in green and blue on Priority Block map to left), especially in areas with larger concentrations of these blocks.
- Finish priority blocks that are close to completion** – for example, the navy-blue blocks shown on the 2020 Target map only require 1-2 nocturnal survey hours to be finished!
- Atlas in non-priority blocks with good habitats and public lands near home** – if you are unable to travel to targeted blocks or blockbusting events, consider using your birding time to visit 'regular' Atlas blocks near you that have accessible areas of good habitat. In the east, this may mean areas with wetlands. In the west, this may mean birding publicly accessible grasslands or high-elevation forests. Inability to travel far does not mean that you can't contribute.