

PART I – Volunteer Project Proposal

Submit this form to the Volunteer Service Project Chair for review by the committee.
 Submit to: **Bruce Hill** (euplotes@msn.com)

Or mail to:

**Historic Rivers Chapter Virginia Master Naturalist
 PO BOX 6424
 Williamsburg, VA 23187**

NOTE: The form below is a table. Just tab from cell to cell or click on the box to type your information.

Date of Submission:	December 23, 2009									
Project/Event Name:	2 nd Virginia Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz									
Project Chair (HRCVMN):	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Linda Cole</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Email:</td> <td>lcole@cox.net or Linda.cole@navy.mil</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phone:</td> <td>757-218-8747</td> </tr> </table>		Name:	Linda Cole	Email:	lcole@cox.net or Linda.cole@navy.mil	Phone:	757-218-8747		
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Person submitting: if other than above	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Same as above</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Email:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phone:</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		Name:	Same as above	Email:		Phone:			
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Partner Organization:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>State VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries; VA Society of Ornithology</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Local</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Other</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/>	State VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries; VA Society of Ornithology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other		
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Contact Person/Information: if appropriate	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name:</td> <td>Sergio Harding</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Email:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Phone:</td> <td>804-367-0143</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Address:</td> <td>VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries 4010 W Broad St Richmond, VA 23230</td> </tr> </table>		Name:	Sergio Harding	Email:		Phone:	804-367-0143	Address:	VA Dept of Game and Inland Fisheries 4010 W Broad St Richmond, VA 23230
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Timeframe: Be as specific as possible with date(s) or start and ending times.	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>One-time event, specify date</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Brief duration, specify start and ending time</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/>	One-time event, specify date	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brief duration, specify start and ending time				
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		Seasonal
	X	Continuous The Blitz will be held 30 January through 15 February 2010 and likely for the next few years. The 1 st Blitz was held February 7 through 16, 2009 and saw participation by 173 birders in 27 states ranging from Massachusetts to Texas.
Location(s) Where will the project take place?		One location
	X	A variety of places
<p>Please identify /explain: According to the website, www.vabci.org/rusty-blackbird.asp, the Rusty Blackbird is a breeder in boreal forested wetlands of northern New England, Alaska and the Canadian Provinces and winters largely in the southeastern United States, including Virginia. In Virginia the bird is observed between October and April, which encompasses its fall and spring migratory period as well as its winter stay in the state (between December and February). During both migration and winter the species is often gregarious. Rusty Blackbirds may roost and forage in single-species flocks, but are often encountered in mixed flocks with other blackbirds, notably grackles, cowbirds and red-winged blackbirds. Wintering Rusty Blackbirds are generally associated with swamps, but also forage in open marshes and in a variety of upland habitats, including upland woods, fields, and cattle and hog feed lots. During this period they are omnivorous, foraging on a variety of agricultural crops (including peanut fields), acorn mast (especially acorns of willow oak), beech nuts, pine and other seeds, fruits of various trees and shrubs, as well as aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates and small aquatic vertebrates.</p>		
Type of Event Select all that apply	Descriptors: Select all that apply	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Education/ Outreach	<input type="checkbox"/> Display/poster at a fair, community program, or workshop
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Citizen Science/ Monitoring	<input type="checkbox"/> Speaking for a class, club, or public event
<input type="checkbox"/>	Stewardship	<input type="checkbox"/> Training or conference presentation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> Education/interpretation for children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Education/interpretation for adults
		X Counts (e.g., bird, butterfly, etc.)
		Monitoring (e.g., bird nests, water quality, etc.)
		X WildlifeMapping or collecting data
		Habitat restoration, planting, or trail maintenance
		Volunteer development or chapter management
		Other – Please explain below

Description:

What does the project entail?

What will participants actually do?

If this is a speaking engagement, what is the topic?

According to the website, www.vabci.org/rusty-blackbird.asp, the Rusty Blackbird (*Euphagus carolinus*) has undergone critical population declines in recent decades, with losses estimated at between 85 and 97% based on data from the [North American Breeding Bird Survey](#) (BBS) and the [Christmas Bird Count](#) (CBC). This surpasses the well-publicized population declines of many forest interior and grassland birds. In Virginia the Rusty Blackbird was 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 Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz is a project of the [International Rusty Blackbird Technical Working Group](#), a consortium of partners led by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Research Center. Formed in 2005, the Group has worked to raise the Rusty Blackbird's conservation profile and to help coordinate research taking place across its range. Because population declines may be occurring on both its breeding and wintering grounds, information is urgently needed for both. The Blitz is specifically aimed at the species' wintering range. Here the birds are increasingly scarce and patchy in their distribution, making it challenging to learn about distribution, abundance and ecology as a basis for conservation efforts. **The Blitz is an effort to begin addressing these data gaps through a citizen-science approach involving skilled volunteers.** It seeks to harness the power of the birding community to collect baseline information as a starting point for future monitoring and conservation activities. In addition, the Blitz aims to gather information that both includes and extends beyond traditional CBC areas, that is linked to specific sites (rather than broader circles) and that is housed in a centralized database. All data collected through the Blitz are stored in eBird, a joint project of the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#) and [National Audubon Society](#).

In Virginia the Blitz is coordinated as a project of the Virginia Bird Conservation Initiative by DGIF in partnership with the [Virginia Society of Ornithology](#) and the [Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory](#). [Virginia eBird](#) acts as a portal for data entry. The 2009 Rusty Blackbird Winter Blitz was held Feb 7-16 and saw participation by 173 birders in 27 states ranging from Massachusetts to Texas.

In 2010, the Blitz will be held **Jan 30 - Feb 15**, during which time the blackbirds are easier to find as males sing and the population is relatively sedentary. During this period, volunteers will search for the birds in any locations and habitats that are potentially suitable for wintering Rusty Blackbirds, particularly flocks or concentrations (e.g., dozens or even hundreds of birds). Volunteers who participated in 2009 are also encouraged to revisit sites where they documented the species to collect data on consistency of use of these sites between years. VMN can rely on your database of previous sightings, birding intuition, or local knowledge to search the most likely places for wintering Rusty Blackbirds. Volunteers

	<p>may search wherever they like, whenever they like, and as often as they like during the Blitz period. VMN will be collecting basic information on areas of occurrence (and, equally important, non-occurrence) and flock sizes. The Project asks that we submit our observations through Virginia eBird, so that the data may be analyzed together with eBird Blitz observations from other states. VMN not already registered to eBird, can sign up and start using eBird. VMN can find instructions on how to do so at the Virginia eBird site. Specific instructions and protocols will be made available.</p>						
Experience or Training Needed:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No prior experience needed</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Prior experience needed or preferred. Please explain below.</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Training will be provided. Please give details below</td> </tr> </table> <p>VMN must be able to readily identify Rusty Blackbird (<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>) or accompany someone who can.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No prior experience needed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prior experience needed or preferred. Please explain below.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training will be provided. Please give details below
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Are minors involved?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No</td> </tr> </table> <p>If so, all volunteers must be trained in working with youth and the Above Suspicion policy.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes						
<input type="checkbox"/>	No						
Estimated Prep Time: e.g., hours of prep for speaking engagement	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="width: 100px;"></td> <td>Hours</td> </tr> </table>		Hours				
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Resources provided: e.g., resources are provided for the volunteers by the partner agency							
Resources needed: Volunteers or the chapter must provide with cost, if appropriate.							
Safety <u>In an emergency, always call 911!</u>	<p>Will you need the first aid kit?</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>No</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes						
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No						

	<p>If yes, please contact Susan Powell (smapowell@cox.net or 564-4542) to check-out the first aid kit.</p> <p>What hazards might the volunteers encounter? Normal hazards associated with bird watching as an outdoor activity.</p> <p>How will the risks associated with these hazards be minimized? VMN have been instructed on the risks of outdoor activity.</p>														
<p>Project Evaluation: How will the project be evaluated both during implementation and after completion?</p>	<p>Will you do any of the following? Select all that apply.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Collect data and measure change</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Use an evaluation (e.g., survey, satisfaction measure)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Ask for feedback from participants</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Ask for feedback from partner agencies</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Observe and provide feedback to the VMN chapter</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>This project does not require evaluation</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Other - please give details below</td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Collect data and measure change	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use an evaluation (e.g., survey, satisfaction measure)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask for feedback from participants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask for feedback from partner agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	Observe and provide feedback to the VMN chapter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This project does not require evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other - please give details below
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<p>How will the VMN program be recognized?</p>	<p>Will you do any of the following? Select all that apply.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Collect information or photo for a newspaper article</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Identify possible awards or other recognition given</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td>Other – please give details below</td> </tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Collect information or photo for a newspaper article	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify possible awards or other recognition given	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other – please give details below								
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<i>For VSP Committee use:</i>		
<i>Approval</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<i>Comments:</i>		
<i>Project Number:</i>		