

For Immediate Release  
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Contact: Lee Walker, 804-367-1174

### **Virginia's Newest Wildlife Conservationist License Plate Available April 1, 2011**

Richmond, VA -- Motorists in Virginia have a new opportunity to show how much they care about Virginia's wildlife by being one of the first to drive away with the latest in the series of Virginia Wildlife Conservationist License Plates, *The Bluebird of Happiness*. Not only will drivers have a chance to show everyone they care about wildlife, but they will also help increase public awareness about the importance of preserving and protecting Virginia's diverse natural resources.

After the first 1,000 Bluebird plates have been purchased, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) will receive \$15 of the \$25 additional annual fee. In 2010, the Wildlife Conservationist License Plate series generated \$369,420 for DGIF's conservation efforts. The proceeds are reinvested in wildlife management, research, educational programs, and for purchasing public lands that benefit all wildlife while assuring that outdoor opportunities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, boating, and wildlife watching will be enjoyed by Virginians and by future generations.

The artwork for the new Bluebird Wildlife Conservationist License Plate was painted by nationally-renowned wildlife artist and conservationist Spike Knuth. As far back as the 1950s, Spike has had an eye for painting birds in their natural habitat. Spike has five state waterfowl duck stamps to his credit. After 29 years of service, he retired from DGIF where his paintings, writings and photography highlighted the beauty of the wildlife and nature in a multitude of publications, including *Virginia Wildlife Magazine*, the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail guides, posters, and brochures. He has donated more than 460 original paintings and nearly 100 prints to Ducks Unlimited and other conservation organizations to support fundraising efforts.

DGIF Executive Director and avid birder Bob Duncan predicts "*the Bluebird of Happiness* – the eighth in the Wildlife Conservationist License Plate series – will be one of our best-selling plates." Since 1991, the DGIF and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) have worked hand-in-hand to develop the very popular series of wildlife license plates. The complete wildlife series includes Mallard Duck, White-Tailed Deer, Largemouth Bass, Brook Trout, Wild Turkey, Black Bear, and Bald Eagle. All are currently available through DMV offices.

The Virginia Bluebird Society, a DGIF conservation partner, was thrilled to hear of this addition to the Conservationist License Plate series. "The Bluebird is emblematic of conservation success in Virginia and this plate celebrates that success," said Anne Little, President of the Virginia Bluebird Society. To date, with the support of DGIF, the VBS has helped to fledge over 158,000 cavity nesting birds through their Bluebird Box Trails.

To learn more about the DGIF Wildlife Conservationist License Plates visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/plates> or the Virginia Bluebird Society <http://www.virginiabluebirds.org>

