



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 75, No. 1

September-October 2026

Thursday, Sept. 10 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

TBD for Program and Speaker

Thursday, Oct. 8 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

TBD for Program and Speaker



Officers at the June 2026 Annual Picnic in Newport News Park organized by Brenda and Jeannie. From left Shawn Dash, Jane Frigo, Dianne Snyder, Brenda and C. L. Tanner, Jeannie and Harold Atkins, Mark Sopko, and John Adair. From Dianne Snyder.

HRBC Outdoors

Regular Bird Walks in Newport News Park 7:00 AM on 1st and 3rd Sundays of all 12 months, but not for the 1st Sunday of March, when we gather the previous Saturday. Meet at big parking lot behind Ranger Station.

Leader: Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com
home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-7925

Fort Monroe Fourth Friday Bird Walks 8:00 AM on the 4th Friday ("Fort Friday") of all 12 months. Meet at parking lot next to Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center at 30 Ingalls Road, Fort Monroe.

Leader: Mark Sopko mgsopko@gmail.com,
cell 804-815-2897

James Abbott is the Leader for all of the following **HRBC Outdoors** events. He sends details about parking, starting time, and possible ID requirements and expense by email prior to the event.

Leader: James Abbott jaa3469@gmail.com
757-320-9191 (text or phone)

Field Trip to Sandy Bottom Nature Park
Saturday, September 26, 2026

Field Trip to Eastern Shore
Saturday, October 17, 2026

Field Trip to Grandview Beach
Saturday, November 21, 2026

Field Trip to Mackay Island NWR
Sunday, December 13, 2026

Audubon Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, December 19, 2026

Field Trip to York River
Saturday, January 9, 2027

Field Trip to CBBT/Eastern Shore
Saturday, February 13, 2027

Field Trip to Hog Island WMA
Saturday, March 20, 2027

Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp
Saturday, April 24, 2027

Field Trip to Back Bay
Saturday, May 1, 2027

President's Perch

Another Year - Keep Looking Up!

By Shawn Dash

Another year of exploration, bird talks, field trips, and sharing time with folks who might love birds just as much as you do—or perhaps even a little more! The Hampton Roads Bird Club is fortunate to have a wonderful group of members and board members focused on providing enjoyable experiences for everyone. From a beautiful fall morning at Newport News Park to a chilly day birding around the bridge-tunnels, our goal remains wonderfully simple: have fun, enjoy one another's company, and spend some time observing our avian friends.

And it turns out all that birding may be doing us more good than we realize. In 2022, Ryan Hammoud and colleagues found that simply seeing or hearing birds was associated with improved mental well-being—and that the positive effect could linger after the encounter. A 2023 study involving older adults found that regular birdwatching helped support cognitive activity, mobility, social interaction, and

general well-being. Even more interesting, Erik Wing and his research team reported in 2026 that experienced birders showed differences in areas of the brain involved in attention, perception, and memory. Their work does not prove that birding prevents cognitive decline, but it suggests that continually learning birds, remembering field marks and songs, and challenging ourselves to make that tricky identification may help keep our minds engaged as we age. We have younger members, older members, expert birders, and novices with growing interests; all benefiting our minds, bodies, and souls.

That sense of community is what makes the Hampton Roads Bird Club special. As we gather for our monthly meetings and meet one another along the trails, remember the people who help make it all happen. Keep those dues headed toward John Adair, and tip your hat to Vice President Mark Sopko for organizing our speakers and meeting activities. You would not be reading this without Tom Charlock, while Cindy Schultz helps keep the records of our adventures. James Abbott keeps our field trips moving, while Jane Frigo welcomes us each month with her cheerful first-Sunday walk—and gets us through the rest of the month with another outing on the third Sunday. Gwen Harris brings her energy to welcoming our newest members, while Pete Peterman, Michael Myer, Dianne Snyder, and former President Dave Youker continue to provide support, wisdom, and plenty of birding advice. And perhaps among the most important assignments of all, Brenda Tanner and Jeannie Atkins make sure hospitality, snacks, conversation, and fun remain part of the club experience.

Fall is right around the corner. Shorebirds have already been working their way through our region, warblers are beginning their return journeys toward the tropics, and even our year-round residents are adjusting to shorter days and preparing for the months ahead.

So grab the binoculars, bring a friend— young or old—and never forget to look up. There is always another bird to see, another call to learn, another place to explore, and another story to share with the best birding group around, the Hampton Roads Bird Club.

Refreshments for the Monthly Club Meetings

By Brenda Tanner and Jeannie Atkins

Hope everyone had a great summer! Now that it's coming to a close, we are looking forward to getting back together with our HRBC birding friends. At the September 10 meeting at Sandy Bottom, refreshments will be provided by Shawn Dash, Mark Sopko, Dianne Snyder, and Marilyn Adair. That evening we will pass around a clipboard for people to sign up to bring refreshments for future meetings. Looking forward to seeing all of you this fall.

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757-867-8407

Jeannie Atkins
jeannie.and.harold@icloud.com 757-287-3985

A Way to Express Your View on the Osprey/Menhaden Issue

The Nature Conservancy, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Professor Bryan Watts of William and Mary, and others argue that excessive industrial fishing of Menhaden, which are fed by adult Osprey to their chicks, seriously threatens the reproductive success of the local Osprey population. Omega Protein corporation, which does the industrial fishing, argues to the contrary. Thru October 9, 2026, you can easily provide your opinion on this to the Atlantic

States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), which regulates fishing: <https://asmfc.org/actions/atlantic-menhaden-draft-addendum-ii/>

The Virginia legislature has okayed funds for research on this topic at the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences.

Omega Protein employs some 200 on large vessels. More numerous small-boat Chesapeake professional fishermen, who transport amateurs for sport fishing, say the excessive take of Menhaden (a bait fish) by Omega in the Bay spoils their businesses. Omega captains have told me that they could take all they need from the Atlantic rather than the Bay; Omega crews say that operations in the stormier ocean are less safe.



Cape May Warbler at Magee Marsh Boardwalk in Ohio during May 2026. That annual "Biggest Week in American Birding" festival is a popular informal destination for club members. Photo by Dianne Snyder.

Steve Brusatte's *The Story of Birds: A New History from Their Dinosaur Origins to the Present*

Review by Pete Peterman

I have read both previous books written by Steve Brusatte: *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs* and *The Rise and Reign of the Mammals*. I enjoyed both and knew he was a paleontologist (he digs up fossils), so I believed he would have the best perspective on how we got from dinosaur birds to what we experience today, the more than 11,000 species and counting, that we have so far identified are modern day birds. The starting point is to stop saying that the asteroid that struck the earth 66 million years ago wiped out the dinosaurs. It did not as you can attest by simply looking and listening to the birds that are in your backyard. Our birds are dinosaurs even though they don't look like T Rex or Triceratops, which many will envision when you mention dinosaurs. He begins by exploring how dinosaurs gradually developed the trademark features of birds one-by-one—feathers, wings, beaks, big brains, keen senses, and warm-blooded metabolisms. The author takes you through using the fossil record of how this group of dinosaurs instead of getting bigger, got smaller and developed the ability to fly. When the asteroid hit and wiped out probably 75% of all living things including trees and plants that relied on the sun to produce food, these small dinosaurs probably survived because they fed on seeds and detritus and they could hole-up in burrows or caves and they were mobile. As the earth slowly recovered, they rapidly evolved, along with the small number of mammals that survived, to fill the voids available in the food web now that the big dinosaurs were no longer. Along the way, we meet a variety of remarkable – now extinct – species:

- 10-foot-tall terror birds with beaks that sliced flesh

- Elephant birds that lived on Madagascar and laid eggs the size of footballs
- Pelagornithid seabirds with 20-foot wingspans
- A ferocious Jamaican ibis that used its wings as clubs to attack rivals

Yet, Brusatte also urges us to appreciate the extraordinariness of birds alive today – penguins that literally fly underwater, parrots that can mimic human speech and crows that can make tools and are smarter than most mammals.

A fascinating scientific history that unearths the origins of birds, *The Story of Birds* establishes the living legacy of this remarkable species. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and highly recommend it.

Photo Contest Winners

By Michael Meyer

Summer Sunshine



Summer Tanager by Pete Peterman

Pete: “The female Summer Tanager I took on 16 July at First Landing State Park. She has a small grub in her beak that she was going to feed her chicks with, but would not go to the nest while I was there. The male was screaming at me, so I had to get out of there quickly.”



Northern Yellow Warbler by Pete Peterman

Pete: "I'm sending 2 photos from my trip to Lake Ontario ... and the second one of the Northern Yellow Warbler at our campsite on June 6. The Northern Yellows were everywhere!"



Great Crested Flycatcher by Pete Peterman

Pete: "I'm sending 2 photos from my trip to Lake Ontario where I camped with my kids and their family at Sandbanks Provincial Park. The first one is a Great Crested Flycatcher taken on June 2 on the Dunes Trail..."



Blackburnian Warbler by Bryan Barmore

Bryan: "The Blackburnian Warbler was seen at Magee Marsh during the Biggest Week in American Birding festival. For a warbler that I have only even seen at the tops of tall trees, it was amazing to get such close, eye-level views. This one was particularly accommodating."



Black-throated Green Warbler by Pete Peterman

Pete: "I was camping in Canada with both of my kids and their families. I don't get to see them very often, so this was a real treat. I haven't processed those photos yet so I'm sending 2 from the Biggest Birding Week in America which you and several other HRBC members attended. These were both taken on Wednesday May 13 at Magee Marsh."



Ovenbird by Pete Peterman

Pete: "... taken during the VSO trip to Blacksburg area on May 1-3."



From Compte de Buffon's Histoire naturelle



Baltimore Oriole by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "This male Baltimore Oriole showed up in the month of January and was the first one I had ever had in the area. I immediately put out my Oriole feeder with grape jelly. When he came to eat, he was impossible to photograph because of being very skittish and fast. Finally, I looked out the kitchen window and there he was bathing on Wednesday April 15th at 5 PM, and I got a photo! He left after the bath, and I never saw him again."

3-2-1 Action!



Chestnut-sided Warbler by Pete Peterman

Pete: "... taken during the VSO trip to Blacksburg area on May 1-3."



Tree Swallow by Bryan Barmore

Bryan: "On my first day at the Biggest Week in American Birding festival, this Tree Swallow distracted me from the warblers with repeated stops on the path to pick up dried grass for nest building."



Snowy Egret by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The Snowy Egrets have been showing up early spring for many years. Every now and then later in the summer one will drop in to feed in Salter's Creek; always a joy!"



Prairie Warbler by Bryan Barmore

Bryan: "At the end of a walk by The Nature Conservancy to see Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (which we did see), this Prairie Warbler was seen picking food out of a spider's web. We weren't sure if it was going after the spider or insects the spider had caught."

Intermission. Here are the photo contest rules: A member may submit up to 2 photos each month taken in the last 60 days. Name each file with the photographer and the bird's name (i.e., ShawnDash_Osprey). Submit to Michael Meyer (michael.meyer@cnu.edu) by the 10th of each month. Winners will be contacted by the newsletter editor to provide either a short writeup or a brief phone interview from which a narrative may be composed. Intermission interruptus. Back to contest!

Together is Better



Black-necked Stilts by William McKellar

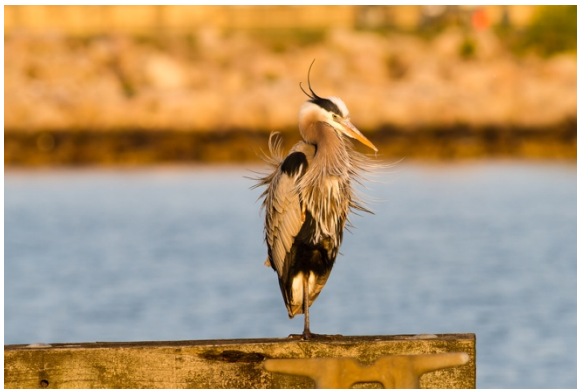
William: "On the first day of May, we went to Hog Island to see the variety of shorebirds and songbirds migrating through the area. As we moved through, we saw a great amount of activity, but the highlight was this pair of Black-necked Stilts which were mixed in with the other shorebirds feeding in the shallow pool."



Bald Eagles by William McKellar

William: "One afternoon we decided to stop and check the Yorktown Battlefield Bald Eagle's nest and found that the chicks were fairly active. We watched them as they moved around the nest, and eventually they gave me the perfect opportunity for a portrait of them."

Looking Good



Great Blue Heron by Bryan Barmore

Bryan: "This Great Blue Heron was riding out the winds at Fort Monroe on the old pier near the Chamberlain."



Ruby-throated Hummingbird
by William McKellar

William: "During a quiet afternoon, I decided to head to the backyard and sit and wait quietly for the hummingbird to visit the perch by my feeder. After some waiting, my patience paid off and I got a unique shot of the bird with its bill open."



Western Cattle Egret by William McKellar

William: "May 28th was the last day that I needed to ride the ferry before the summer break. As we drove down to the dock, the ferry on the Surry side, I spotted a rather small egret on the side of the road. I quickly realized that something was off and told my mother to turn around. Upon further inspection, I found out that I was looking at my lifer Western Cattle-Egret!"

Shades of Sunset



Red-tailed Hawk by Pete Peterman

Pete: "The immature Red-tailed Hawk I took on July 30th in my backyard. I went out my front door and went around the side and tried to use a bush to screen me from the hawk. I did get several shots before he said I had done enough and flew off."



Bay-breasted Warbler by Pete Peterman

Pete: "I was camping in Canada with both of my kids and their families. I don't get to see them very often, so this was a real treat. I haven't processed those photos yet so I'm sending 2 from the Biggest Birding Week in America which you and several other HRBC members attended. These were both taken on Wednesday May 13 at Magee Marsh."

Record of HRBC Bird Walks in Newport News Park

By Jane Frigo, Cindy Schulz,
and Bill Boeh

This has links to eBird reports for 2026.



Northern Cardinal by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The male Northern Cardinal is a constant visitor, and his favorite food are the peanuts but also eats the crunchy peanut butter and raisins."

Date	eBird report link for NN Park
May 3	https://ebird.org/tripreport/513337
May 17	https://ebird.org/tripreport/523630
Jun 21	https://ebird.org/tripreport/541458
Jul 5	https://ebird.org/tripreport/546898
Aug 2	https://ebird.org/tripreport/555727
Aug 16	https://ebird.org/tripreport/560704

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TO JOIN OR RENEW. If you would like to join the Hampton Roads Bird Club or renew your membership, there are several convenient ways to do so. Dues remain at \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families. New members, and anyone whose information has changed, please complete the form below and send to John Adair, HRBC Treasurer.

Submit your application and payment as follows:

- 1) Mail to: John Adair, 109 Nansemond Turn, Yorktown, VA 23693, adairjj@gmail.com.
- 2) Drop off at: Wild Wings Nature Store, Glendale Shopping Center in Newport News.
- 3) Pay by PayPal or credit card at: <https://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org/membership>.

Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

New Member (F/I) _____ Renewal _____ Date: _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: H: _____ C: _____ W: _____

Email(s): _____

- ☐ Only check this box if you need the newsletter delivered via the postal system;
 HRBC is trying to save trees and reduce club expenses by using email.

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