



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

*Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)*

[www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org](http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org) and on Facebook

Vol. 69, No. 1

September/October 2020

**September 10 Meeting  
7:00 PM using internet Zoom**

**Foraging Habits of  
Migrating Songbirds**

By Chance Hines

Chance Hines is a research biologist for the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB). Chance has been working with CCB since 2014. His current role places him in charge of monitoring Red-cockaded Woodpecker populations at Piney Grove Preserve and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. He also gets a chance to study his beloved passerines while researching wintering Ipswich sparrows along the Atlantic coast. His graduate work at Old Dominion University focused on fall migratory songbird ecology. His talk will cover his research on migrating songbirds and what they eat to fuel their long journeys.

**October 8 Meeting  
7:00 PM using internet Zoom**

**Ticks, Birds, and People**

By Dr. Ashley Kennedy

Like it or not (and who does?), most birders encounter ticks at some point along their birding adventures. Come listen to Dr. Kennedy share everything you wanted to know about ticks and probably some things you didn't. Learn about the ticks that parasitize birds and people, the diseases associated with them, and what you can do to avoid ticks in the future. Her dissertation research at the University of Delaware focused on bird-insect food webs.

What is

**"7:00 PM using internet Zoom"?**

You'll need a computer connected to the internet with email. A few days before the meeting, you'll receive an email from HRBC President Shawn Dash. The email will have a link to take you to the Zoom meeting.



Tick infestation (from Shawn Dash)

## HRBC Outdoors

Because of Covid-19, all HRBC outdoor events require minimum social distancing of 6 feet. Groups larger than 8 will be divided; this requirement can cause “first-come/first-served” circumstances. Face covering is needed and must be worn if distancing cannot be maintained. Carpooling and sharing of equipment are not allowed. Failure to comply will result in immediate cancellation of the event.

### Regular bird walks in Newport News Park

First and third Sundays all months at 7:00 AM. Meet at big parking lot behind Ranger Station. Leader: Jane Frigo, home 757-873-0721, cell 757-660-3405, [birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com)

### Field Trip to Hog Island (see this page)

Saturday, 8:30 AM, September 19, 2020  
Leaders: Harry and Rochelle Colestock  
[hcolesto@hotmail.com](mailto:hcolesto@hotmail.com)  
804-840-7224 (text or phone)

**Field Trip to Eastern Shore** (full information will be posted later on [hamptonroadsbirdclub.org](http://hamptonroadsbirdclub.org) and/or sent by email)

Saturday, October 17, 2020  
Leaders: Harry and Rochelle Colestock  
[hcolesto@hotmail.com](mailto:hcolesto@hotmail.com)  
804-840-7224 (text or phone)

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## Field Trip to Hog Island Wildlife Management Area (WMA)

**8:30 AM, September 19, 2020**

By Harry and Rochelle Colestock

- Sign-up: Up to 14 members on first-come, first-serve basis. Notify us by email at [hcolesto@hotmail.com](mailto:hcolesto@hotmail.com) or text/phone at 804-840-7224. Please provide name, contact info, and group preference for the trip.
- The group preference will be necessary if we have over 6 people sign up and we split into two groups - there would be a “Driving-trail only” group and a “hiking/driving trail group.”

- Timing: We will meet at 8:30 AM at the pullover area on the left AFTER entering the Wildlife Management Area. Please allow time to get through the extensive security check at the Dominion Resources checkpoint.
- For the Hog Island WMA trip, there will be a small (\$2-4) fee for each person depending on how many are in the group.
- Social distancing and other health maintenance items set forth by the club will be strictly observed.
- Anyone who goes on a wait list for this trip and is not selected to go will have priority for the next scheduled trip if they chose to do so.

## President’s Perch

By Shawn Dash

Like many species of birds, humans too must have the ability to adapt to dynamic environments, limit competition, reduce stress, avoid disease, live and be merry (of course birds are merry). The shifting nature of our world and our species has been at the forefront of everyone’s mind, reminding us all that we are part of the system of nature. Reminding us that technology and medicine can prolong life and increase its quality, yet we are still part of a global ecosystem. Perhaps, being birders and ornithophiles, such statements are no surprise. Our neotropical migrants provide a good example of this. These birds must travel half a world and deal with the stresses and influences from two hemispheres: from deforestation of rainforest in Brazil to habitat fragmentation in Michigan. Our minds are always focused on the tentative nature of avian life. These last few months have changed the nature of social interactions, birding, research, ecosystem health, politics, family life, and so on; reminding us of the speculative character of our own lives.

But what has not changed is our interest in nature and birds. In the coming months, we will adopt virtual monthly meetings held on Zoom that are recorded for future viewership on a YouTube channel and linked to our Facebook page. I understand that many are not tech-savvy and technology may scare some, but I

want to assure you, the board of the Hampton Roads Bird Club wants you and your engagement. Please contact us to help you navigate this virtual world and stay connected to this group of OUTSTANDING folks. I will be working to a series of bird biology workshops (that I had planned to do over the summer, but events do come up) via Zoom to help those interested in learning a bit more about avian science, with these lectures and notes available to club members. I would also like to encourage club members to submit photos for a monthly contest. Photos will be collected, posted on Facebook for voting, and the winning member each month set will have their photos shared in the newsletter and meeting. What a great way to celebrate our members and nature!

Staying connected to others is an important and first-rate concern for the HRBC. We want to continue with our club's mission and focus over the coming months. While virtual meetings will serve us well, we still welcome engagement in Sunday Bird Walks and Field Trips. However, precautionary procedures are in place that we are asking you to follow. These guidelines are not only for the physical health and safety of the club members but also for their mental health related to Covid-19. I know some Birding Clubs and Chapters of Audubon Society have forgone meetings and in-person activities, whereas others are still proceeding as they always did (I know of one colleague's group in Texas that had a number of the trip's attendees contracting Covid-19). As we move toward another year of the Hampton Roads Bird Club's activities in the field, a new set of requirements will take effect immediately for the safety, well-being, and peace of mind of all participants. All Sunday Walks and Field Trips will be limited to a group size that can follow a minimum 6-foot social distancing. Therefore, the size of the group will be proportional to the ability for members to spread out but will not exceed 8 persons. If more than 8 persons are present, the group will be divided to ensure spacing requirements. A face covering is required while recreating on all trips. Participants will be required to wear it whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. Whereas in the past we encouraged carpooling, sharing equipment, and a glance through a friend's scope, NO materials will be shared on future trips. Failing to comply with social distancing guidelines, small group sizes, wearing a mask, and no sharing will cause the walk or field trip to be canceled on the spot. The Hampton Roads Bird Club takes the responsibility for

providing safe interactions seriously. With the paramount need of all parties to be proactive and mindful of the overall health of members and participants, these measures must be in place.

There is often a lot of doom and gloom. Changing political landscapes, environmental rules and regulations ebb and flow, and we are having some fear regarding a tiny particle of genetic material that is set about to ruin and destroy some aspects of lifestyles. But nature finds a way and so do we. Members are active with citizen science projects, working hard over the last year to push for a means to save the nesting birds of the HRBT, going on walks to document our local birds, and keeping track of visitors to our home feeders. Never forget all that this club does and the impact it has on its members, the community, and, most importantly, the birds. Your passion, your excitement, and our group are positive forces for conservation and the enjoyment of birds. Let us still engage in informative meetings that celebrate the wonder of birds. We also have a means (in smaller groups) to enjoy the club members, the outdoors, and of course the birds in the field. If you have ideas on how we can move forward this year with programs, activities, trips, or anything else please share those with me.

I have missed the restorative power of nature because of a changing paradigm of the virtual University, unrest of students and parents, concerns with my health, and just the fact that I am a "my glass requires refilling" kind of guy. I miss the club members, the walks, the talks, and the squawks being with the club. However, those are fleeting feelings of unrest. I am excited to offer a new means to enjoy birds with you. I am encouraged by the support and efforts members have made to stay active and connect. I am happy to reconnect via the walks and virtual presenter. And most importantly I am honored to be serving as your President again. Keep your ears and eyes at the ready and your mind open for birding adventures.

## **Renew Membership by Credit Card** by John Adair

During this extended period of Covid-19 separation and distancing, we all need fellowship. The club allows us to share our common interest in bird observation, study, and conservation. September is membership renewal month and this year there is a new, safe and easy way to pay by credit card on the

HRBC website at <https://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org>. The HRBC annual dues remain at \$15 for individuals and \$20 for family membership. You can also pay dues at Wild Birds Unlimited in Yorktown, at Wild Wings Nature Store in Newport News or by mail to the treasurer (check payable to HRBC). For renewing members, no form is required unless there are changes to your contact information. Please support your club and help your (volunteer) treasurer by renewing during September.

John Adair, (757) 268-5446  
HRBC Treasurer  
109 Nansemond Turn  
Yorktown VA 23693

### **Bird Notes Photo Contest**

In President's Perch Shawn announced, "a monthly contest. Photos will be collected, posted on Facebook for voting, and the winning member each month set will have their photos shared in the newsletter and meeting." Because of her numerous and outstanding contributions for earlier editions, your newsletter editor ([tomcharlock@gmail.com](mailto:tomcharlock@gmail.com)) has taken the liberty of electing Dianne Snyder as the first kickoff winner. Just send a picture or a small set – of birds, people, or combination. We'll try to get them on HRBC Facebook and organize a vote count (as will be done on November 3 for POTUS). The winner can either contribute a bit of text or have us generate some from a phone interview.

### **Recalling Birds on the Gulf Coast**

By Dianne Snyder

For those of you, that I haven't told, my mother and I left at the end of October and began a road trip to the east coast of Texas. I went in search of those life birds that the Lone Star shoreline had to offer.



Roseate Spoonbills and Black-necked Stilts  
(by Dianne Snyder)

My mother Naomi and I were heading to the ferry dock to see the dolphins when I saw a sign that read "Birding Center" with an arrow pointing left. Temptation. I immediately swerved my vehicle to the left. What a wonderful detour, though we never made it to the dock to see the dolphins. I had discovered the best birding spot of the entire trip.



Neotropic Cormorant (by Dianne Snyder)



American Bittern (by Dianne Snyder)

I visited sixteen National Wildlife Refuges on this trip, but my favorite was that local birding site in Port Arkansas, named Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center. It was superb. I have never seen so many different species, all feeding together and so close. These birds were not shy and basically ignored everyone who was gathered on the boardwalk. No scopes were needed. That evening, I saw so many types ... and returned early the next day for some great photos of an American Bittern and a Sora, plus the resident alligator.

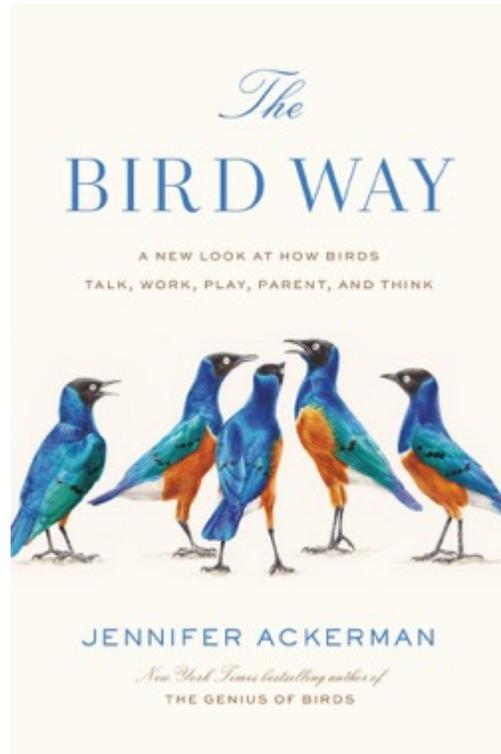


Sora (by Dianne Snyder)

## Book Review

### **“The Bird Way, A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think” by Jennifer Ackerman**

By Pete Peterman



I first read Jennifer Ackerman with her book: “The Genius of Birds.” I found her descriptions of bird life well documented and extremely compelling and therefore, I looked forward to reading this latest description of the research into bird behavior. She opens the book with the quote: “There is the mammal way and there is the bird way.” Drawing on personal observations, the latest science, and her bird-related travel around the world, Ackerman shows there is clearly no single bird way of being. In every respect, in plumage, form, song, flight, lifestyle, niche, and behavior, birds vary.

In the Introduction, she drives home the point stated by the biologist E. O. Wilson, “When you have seen one bird, you have not seen them all.” She then goes through describing in several chapters for each section on Talk, Work, Play, Love, and Parent.

In Talk, she states: “Birds are the great communicators of the animal world. They talk while

they court and while they fight, while they forage and while they travel, while they stave off predators and while they raise their young. They speak with their voices, their bodies, and their feathers.” She covers the latest science where it has been found that some species of birds make sounds in the ultrasound range and proposes that female singing and duetting was lost in some species due to their migratory requirements while those species that are resident, such as in the tropics, the females still sing. In alarm calls, both the mobbing calls and the flee alarm calls, science has shown that birds learn the meaning of these calls, type of predator, where it is, etc., by experience and not that these calls are similar in structure across the species. Until recently, it was thought that humans had a lock on deception and lying. She covers the behavior of the lyrebirds and describes how their mimicry deceives even the species that they are mimicking.

In *Work*, she states: “What is true for us is true for birds, too: They are what they eat.” She covers several species such as the loggerhead shrike, vultures, Blackiston’s fish owl, oilbirds and seabirds. She covers the use of tools such as done by experiments with the New Caledonian crows and the spreading of wildfires by black kites in Australia as a foraging strategy and the learned behavior of kelp gulls from an innovation of one gull to feed on the skin and blubber from the backs of resting southern right whales. A most interesting description was how antbirds keep track of army ants and forage right in front of the swarm as animals and insects try to escape the onslaught.

In *Play*, she describes the antics of ravens under the study of Mathias Osvath and the kea at the Messerli Research Institute. It shows that birds play. Not all species play as often or in complex ways as is shown in ravens and keas. Gordon Burghardt gives the following definition of play: “Play is repeated, seemingly non-functional behavior different from more adaptive versions...and initiated when the animal is in a relaxed, unstimulating or low stress setting.”

In *Love*, she covers several species sexually as well as the courtship displays and songs. She covers different strategies of those species that use leks for males to show off and females to choose. Darwin’s theory of sexual selection using female preference is used to explain why some males are chosen while others are not.

In the last section, *Parent*, she covers nest building and the large spectrum of parenting, from fierce protection to complete neglect. She covers species of brood parasites and how some species do countermeasures such as changing their egg shape or spots so the eggs of the brood parasite can be discovered and how there is then counter changes by the brood parasite. She also provides information that 9 percent of bird species breed cooperatively and share parental care.

Jennifer Ackerman finishes the book by citing the problems that birds face in the changing environments caused by man, but she also cites the hope that we see in some species adapting using evolutionary change and also of innovation and keen problem solving. She states it would do well to watch birds more and learn from their marvelous ways of being.

### **Dave Youker Receives VSO Eike Service Award**



Dave Youker, HRBC member and former president

The Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) has honored Dave Youker as a recipient of its prestigious James Eike Service Award. He has given extensive and effective service to the mission of the VSO to systematically study Virginia birds, stimulate interest in them, and promote conservation of our natural environment. Dave was nominated by Jane Frigo, and Pete Peterman provided a supporting letter. Past awardees include Robert Ake, Meredith Bell, Edward ‘Ned’ Brinkley, Ruth Beck, Teta Kain, Dorothy Mitchell, Dot Silsby, and Charles Hacker.

## Okay+ Seabird Move to Fort Wool

By Wendy and Ellis Maxey



Fort Wool, across the channel from Fort Monroe  
(by Ellis Maxey)

Just a few months ago we were all upset over the lost nesting site for the birds that return to the HRBT island each year. It now looks like Virginia has a great success story. Tunnel expansion continues, but the endangered migratory seabirds have a new place to nest. The birds, who had long ignored Fort Wool, were nudged to move their nesting sites to an improved Fort Wool and adjacent barges. Much of the old fort area was cleared of vegetation, rats were exterminated, and a blend of sand and gravel was spread. Barges were anchored nearby to provide even more space. Border Collies were brought in to convince the birds to move from the tunnel island to Fort Wool and the barges.



Terns nesting to our relief (by Ellis Maxey)

Ellis and I have made numerous trips to Fort Wool and regard the present bird setup as a wonder. Ellis has taken some pictures from a rocking boat. Not only have the Royal Terns moved in but we've seen American Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Brown Pelicans, Laughing Gulls, Herring Gulls, Common Terns, Least Terns, Double-crested Cormorants, Ruddy Turnstones, Cattle Egrets, Caspian Terns, and unidentified peeps.



Flock checks out the new place (by Ellis Maxey)



Stowaway appreciates the results (by Ellis Maxey)

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To join the Hampton Roads Bird Club, please fill out the form below and bring it along with your check (payable to Hampton Roads Bird Club) to the next meeting or mail to: **John Adair, 109 Nansemond Turn, Yorktown, Virginia 23693**. Membership is from September 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.** Dues can be paid by card at HRBC website at <https://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org>. NOTE: Membership dues can be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in the Glendale Shopping Center in Newport News, or at Wild Birds on Kiln Creek Parkway in Yorktown. Meetings are held at the Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA, on the second Thursday of the month, September through May, at 6:30 PM.

#### Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check this box to receive newsletter via email/website instead of hard copy by mail.

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