



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 72, No. 4

March-April 2024

Thurs., March 14 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Thurs., April 11 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Birds on a Trip to Texas in 2022

By Marc Nichols

Marc is a Ranger at Sandy Bottom and a former HRBC Field Trip leader.



Female Common Merganser on Lake Biggins
in Newport News By Dianne Snyder

Temporal Dynamics of Avian Assemblages: An 18-year study

By Kiera Ward and Ijahnay Lewis

Two Hampton University students will examine changes over time in data from HRBC Sunday bird walks in Newport News Park.

and a second presentation

Highlights of HRBC Bird Counts

By Bill Boeh

Bill is HRBC Secretary and Master of Counts.

HRBC Outdoors

Regular Bird Walks in Newport News Park

7:00 AM on 1st and 3rd Sundays of all 12 months, unless the city schedules a special mass event.

No Bird Walk on Mar. 3, 2024 (Marathon race).

Meet at big parking lot behind Ranger Station.

Leader: Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com

home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-7925

SATURDAY Bird Walk in Newport News Park

7:00 AM, March 2, 2024

Leader: Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com

home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-7925



Back Bay Tram field trip of Feb. 10, 2024
By Dianne Snyder



Same field trip as shown on left, but from the perspective of a subject bird. By Shawn Dash.

Hog Island Wildlife Management Area

Saturday, March 23, 2024

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

Great Dismal Swamp

Sunday, April 21, 2024

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

Greensprings / Powhatan Creek Trails

Saturday, May 11, 2024

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

**HRBC 2024 Spring Bird Count
Saturday May 4, 2024**

By Bill Boeh

The HRBC has been conducting the Spring Bird Count (SBC) since 1995. Please join us in being part of this citizen science effort to support bird conservation. It's great fun and a great way to help conserve the birds--and for new members, a great way to be introduced to some of the best birding sites in our region. The count will be conducted in the same manner as the Christmas Bird Count, within the Newport News circle. The circle is divided into 13 sectors on the lower Peninsula; each sector will have its own team of observers. The typical count spans most of the day, but some counts

only go for a few hours. Don't hesitate to participate because you don't feel you're proficient enough at identifying birds - sector counts are led by our more experienced birders. You can contribute by adding more eyes and ears to help detect the birds for identification (and counting). You'll be building your identification skills as well. If you can't participate in a field count, feeder-watching is another way you can support this effort. Please let me know if you are interested in participating by email or phone/text at phrogdolph@gmail.com 757-951-7959.



Long-tailed Ducks at CCBT Island 4 field trip on Jan. 13, 2024 By Mark Sopko

President's Perch: "I am not that Kind of Doctor..."

By Shawn Dash

Within ego-fueled academic circles, a debate rages about who qualifies as a "real" doctor and who does not. The discussion centers on reaching a pinnacle of knowledge deserving great awe and respect. Who is the best and who accrued enough college debt to make a state budget blush. Jabs and passive-aggressive quips about PhDs and MDs fly, typically all lingua-in-cheek (yes, an entomologist knows some medical terms too). This of course inconsequential meaning of degrees is not what consumes my thoughts however, what prompts my contemplation is the health impacts of birding. Especially, when considering some recent research.

From scorching days in southeastern Arizona to chilly evenings at Sax Zim Bog in Minnesota, from the brisk coast of winter gull hunting, and the low oxygen high in alpine meadows, birders are extreme in their passion and tough on their bodies. Whether hiking mountain trails searching for cock-of-the-rock, slogging through marshes in search of yellow rails, combating malaria in the rainforest, or enduring frostbite for a penguin, birding is extreme.

Looking high in the canopy for migrating warblers (Warbler Neck) and repetitive stress from flipping through field guides, eye strain on the Merlin app, along with, for some, an obsession to list birds (a life list, a year list, a yard list, a state list, a county list, a list of birds in movies, a list of birds thought about, a list of birds mentioned in cozy mystery books, and so forth). Birding impacts the body.

While birding may seem, on the surface, to pose health concerns it is, in fact, excellent exercise. It builds muscle, supports good hand-eye coordination, provides an aerobic workout, and moderate exposure to the sun builds Vitamin D, keeping moods positive and energy high. This quest is not only beneficial for the body but also for the mind and soul. The mental gymnastics of recalling field characters, names, songs, calls, and habitats build neural connections. Puzzling over a glimpse of a sparrow supports a healthy mental recall ability and staves off boredom. Reading about birds, observing them, and being in nature all support positive cognitive functions.

More importantly, as research focuses on the restorative powers of nature, a solid set of findings suggests that you should be birding. Beyond the social aspect and the physical exertion, birding brings peace and reflection. Medical research indicates that birding decreases the impact of mental illness, reduces overall stress (though I still can't identify that fall warbler!), and can help align or realign our perspectives and energy.

For me, birding has always been a joy. Whether with friends and family or alone, birding "fixes" things. Whether actively hiking to add to my year list, traveling for my life list, sitting with some tea and scone at the feeding stations, or contemplating birds by a lakeside, reflecting on life while birding positively impacts my health. We all can do with some more exercise, maintaining our mental health, and recharging our soul from nature. The science is there, regardless of who the "real doctor" is—the prescription is more birding.

Winter Photo Contest Winners

By Michael Meyer

January



Ring-billed Gulls
Tied for Gold by Bill Boeh

Bill: "The photo was taken during the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Field trip on January 13 at Island Four. The Ring-billed Gull is a common bird, and we often tend to overlook them. But the birds were

so beautifully set in an iconic backdrop (rocks, wave action, bright sunshine) that I felt compelled to take their picture. My camera is a Canon PowerShot SX-50 HS.



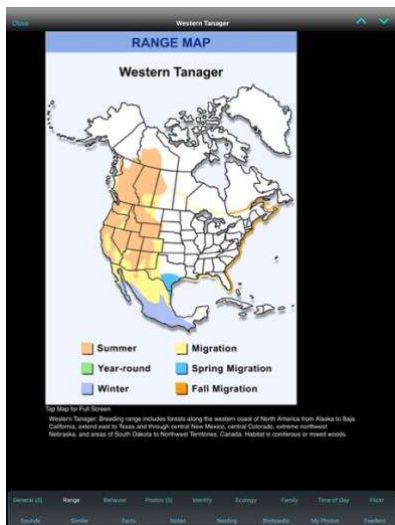
Harlequin Duck
Silver by Pete Peterman

Pete: “The Harlequin Duck was taken at the New Jersey Barnegat Lighthouse State Park on December 28, 2023. I used a Nikon Z-50 with a NIKKOR 100-400 mm lens with a 1.4 extender to give 560 mm. I used a setting of f 13 at 1/1000 sec and an ISO of 3600. I have gone to this location over the Christmas Holidays for several years and the Harlequin Ducks have always been there along with other saltwater ducks and scoters.”

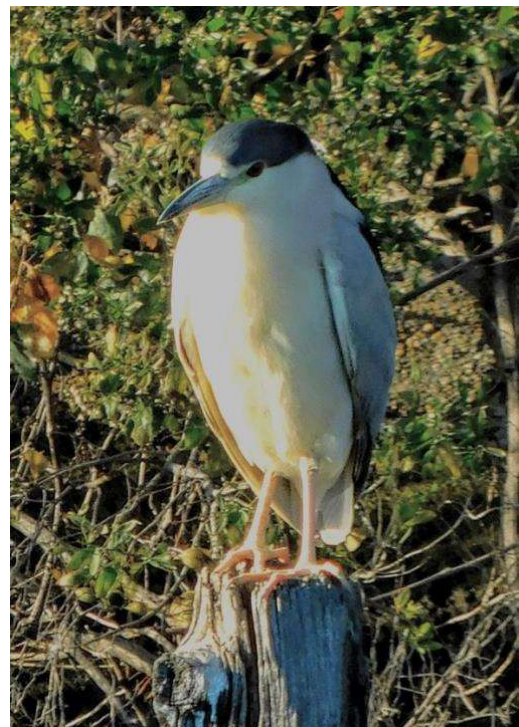


Western Tanager
Tied for Gold by Laura Mae

Laura: “I photoed this Western Tanager in Suffolk on Nansemond River's Christmas Bird Count January 2, 2024. Cindy Hamilton spotted it and identified it. Together, she and I photoed it from across the street; and we marveled at it foraging in a cedar tree among Bluebirds, House Finches and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Our sighting (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S157885860>) appeared to be ebird's first record of the species in Suffolk - that is, until ebird updated. Tracy Tate reported Suffolk's first ever Western Tanager just south of there the day before!”



The limited range of the Western Tanager
From Laura Mae



Black-crowned Night Heron
Bronze by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: “I have Black-crowned Night Herons every winter here on Salter's Creek. They always come in right as the Yellow-crowned Night Herons leave. I

watch them fly out at dusk calling and return the next morning at dawn. They sleep all day in the trees on the Creek as well as pose on the old pilings. This Night Heron was taken on Tuesday, January 2 at 4:00 PM.

February



Blue-headed Vireo
Gold by Pete Peterman

Pete: “The Blue-headed Vireo was quite curious with our group as if he had never seen anything like it before which allowed all to see him.”



Orange-crowned Warbler
Silver by Pete Peterman

Pete: “The Orange-crowned Warbler and the Blue Headed Vireo were both shot at Lake Mattamuskeet, NC during the VSO OBX trip on February 2, 2024. I used the same camera set-up as listed above only changing the ISO to 400 for the Orange-crowned (it was in the sun) and 1800 for the Blue-headed Vireo (it was in the Cyprus Swamp).”



Brown-headed Pelican
Bronze by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: “I always get blessed with at least one or more Brown Pelicans coming in on the Creek each winter and I was not disappointed this year. This Brown Pelican showed up on Monday, Jan. 29th at 3pm in all his lovely white plumage for all of 10 minutes and then he flew out back to the Hampton River.”

Here are the contest rules:

1. A member may submit up to 2 photos each month taken in the last 60 days.
2. Please name each file with the photographer and the bird's name (i.e., ShawnDash_Osprey).
3. Submit to Michael Meyer (michael.meyer@cnu.edu) by the 10th of each month.
4. 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.

2023 Christmas Bird Count Results

By Bill Boeh

This is a capsule summary of the club's participation in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), conducted December 16, 2023. The count was fun, a demonstration of dedication, and source of bird abundance and diversity data for scientific investigations. Total species observed was 120; total birds observed was 22,149. Teams covered the lower Peninsula in 13 sectors.

In addition to reporting the data to Audubon, all observations were submitted to eBird (including 86 separate checklists). Display of count data is much facilitated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird application feature called "Trip Reports" which collates the data from all checklists submitted over a specified period. The Trip Report for the 2023 Newport News Circle CBC is here:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/160558> You don't need to have an eBird account to view the report—just click on the link! There you'll find the list of species, the number of individuals seen by species, and many more details about the count. There you can also "drill down" to see any the specific checklists on which each bird was reported; this can include a map of the observer's route, the observer's comments, and any photos posted. Christmas Bird Count Participants. Let me express my gratitude to all who participated—without them, there is no count! Below is the list of participants, by sector:

Airport: Walt Harris, Gwen Harris, Mary Lynch

Chesapeake: Ellis Maxey, Wendy Maxey,
Lauren Forero

Ft. Monroe: Bryan Barmore, Sharon Burton,
Ray Rob

Grandview: Nick Flanders, Pete Peterman,
Conrad Lickel

Hampton: Dave Brown, Heidi Young,
Christy Gardner, Donna McAdams

Harpersville: Jane Frigo, Marc Nichols,
Elizabeth Wilkins, Jacques van
Montfrans, Hannah Montalvo,
Dianne Snyder

Harwoods Mills: Meredith Bell, Lee Bell,
John Adair, Marilyn Adair

Langley: William Boeh, Mark Sopko,
Cecilia Boyd, Lane Tong

Mariner's Museum: Elisa Flanders, Peggy Rommen
Charlotte Boudreau

Mercury North: Dave Youker, Tracy Tate,
Laura Mae

Newport News: Michael Meyer,
Beth Aberth, Tina White

Poquoson: Betsy Garrett, Holly Horton,
Beata Whitehead

Tabb: Stuart Sweetman, Cory Davis

Feeder Watchers: Barb Abraham, Tom Charlock,
Tina White

If you have any questions, feel free to email me at phrogdolph@gmail.com

Reports for Sunday Walks in Newport News Park and Field Trips

By Bill Boeh

Links to eBird reports for January and February 2024 events are below. Each link takes you to the text summary of a HRBC "1st and 3rd" Sunday walk in Newport News Park or field trip, the number of individuals seen for each species, and the associated eBird checklist(s). Checklists often have photos.

[Jan. 13](#) was a field trip to CBBT islands.

[Feb. 10](#) was Back Bay Tram field trip.

Date	Species Obs.	Report Link
Jan. 7	60	https://ebird.org/tripreport/173205
Jan. 13	36	https://ebird.org/tripreport/173203
Jan. 21	41	https://ebird.org/tripreport/173206
Feb. 4	55	https://ebird.org/tripreport/197220
Feb. 10	69	https://ebird.org/tripreport/197222
Feb. 18	51	https://ebird.org/tripreport/197221

Learning Birds at the Discovery Center of Newport News Park

By Lauran Forero, Senior Ranger

I am hosting free Birding 101 events at Newport News Park. One presentation is given on two dates:

Who-cooks-for-you, allll? Jay-jay! Peter-peter, potato-chip, chick-a-dee-dee! What do these random phrases have in common? They are all common mnemonics for bird songs that bird watchers use to identify a bird! Join a park ranger to learn about what makes bird watchers so "coo-coo" for bird watching. We'll learn some beginner bird watching skills, and then go over common local bird species to get you started (you probably already know them). Then, we'll practice bird watching together outside the Discovery Center using binoculars and a field guide. Be sure to bring your own binoculars and field guide if you already have them! This program is FREE and is recommended for ages 10+.

9:00-10:30 AM Sat., Mar. 23, 2024

at Discovery Center

https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/nnparksrectourism/activity/search/detail/34546?onlineSiteId=0&from_original_cui=true&locale=enUS

FB link: <https://fb.me/e/6xUxZBej1>

9:00-10:30 AM Sat., Apr. 6, 2024

at Discovery Center

[https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/nnparksrectourism/activity/search/detail/34547?onlineSiteId=0&locale=en-US&from_original_cui=true&fbclid=IwAR0yV_c2PGzKQOb3mKPi-](https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/nnparksrectourism/activity/search/detail/34547?onlineSiteId=0&locale=en-US&from_original_cui=true&fbclid=IwAR0yV_c2PGzKQOb3mKPi-OgCdo5FaJBE03nRDzd8xxQHU03_JDvfUWiRd4Q)

[OgCdo5FaJBE03nRDzd8xxQHU03_JDvfUWiRd4Q](https://anc.apm.activecommunities.com/nnparksrectourism/activity/search/detail/34547?onlineSiteId=0&locale=en-US&from_original_cui=true&fbclid=IwAR0yV_c2PGzKQOb3mKPi-OgCdo5FaJBE03nRDzd8xxQHU03_JDvfUWiRd4Q)

FB link: <https://fb.me/e/1wNH0YSSP>

Bird Collisions with Windows

Professor John Swaddle, Faculty Director of the Institute for Integrative Conservation at William and Mary, delivered a Zoom presentation on bird collisions with windows on January 9, 2024. His video showed imaginative outdoor experimental set ups. Here are some rough notes from his talk.

In the USA, domestic cat predation is the only larger human-induced killer of birds than window collisions. Typical houses kill many more than do high rise buildings, simply because there are more

houses. The bird silhouettes now found on some windows are generally not effective at preventing collisions. A square matrix of dark lines covering an entire window does work well; the spacing should be 2 inches (~5cm) or less; the matrix should be on the exterior surface of the window. Plastic deer nets (mesh) should work; they can be suspended outside on, or a short distance from, the glass. Commercial products are becoming available. Swaddle's group is developing an app.

Feeders attached to windows (or very close) are okay; the birds using such feeders will slow down when approaching the windows. Otherwise, keep feeders at considerable distance away from windows; birds often leave feeders at speed, and you want to lessen the chances of a bad window crash. Birds are attracted to lighting, so use shades; turn lights off; flood lights are very bad.

Lean Year Coming for Local Osprey Chicks?

Ospreys did not reproduce well in our vicinity during 2023. Dr. Bryan Watts of William and Mary pointed out that the likely culprit was a lack of Menhaden bait fish, which adult birds feed to their chicks. Omega Protein, an industrial fishing operation, appears to have scooped too many out of the Chesapeake Bay and ground them up for Salmon farms.

House of Delegates HB19 ("Atlantic menhaden et al. to study ecology, fishing impacts and economic importance") was aimed at having the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences investigate the problem, but it flopped in committee. Connor Kish, Executive Director of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club, said it would likely be considered next year and then unfortunately die. Omega gets most of its Menhaden from the deep ocean, but skimming some from the Chesapeake Bay is profitable. Birding and sport fishing interests (which supports jobs, as does Omega) favor having more Menhaden in the Chesapeake. An op-ed in the Feb. 25 Newport News Daily Press addressed this issue.

President	Shawn Dash	drshawntdash@gmail.com	915-491-6227
Vice President	Mark Sopko	mgsopko@gmail.com	804-815-2897
Secretary	William Boeh	phrogdolph@gmail.com	757-951-7959
Treasurer	John Adair	adairji@gmail.com	757-224-8920
Board (7/21-6/24)	Katrina Dash	kmdash4@gmail.com	915-471-1287
Board (7/22-6/25)	Michael Meyer	michael.meyer@cnu.edu	757-303-4790
Board (7/23-6/26)	Pete Peterman.	rwpeterman@verizon.net	757-766-8658
Board (former Pres.)	Dave Youker	youkerd@aol.com	757-344-9385
Field Trip Coordinator	James Abbott	jaa3469@gmail.com	757-320-9191
Web Editor	Wendy Maxey	emaxey@verizon.net	757-483-3003
Web Editor	Ellis Maxey	emaxey@verizon.net	757-483-3003
Hospitality	Jane Frigo	birderjane@gmail.com	757-776-7925
Newsletter Editor	Thomas Charlock	tomcharlock@gmail.com	757-746-9190
Membership	Gwen Harris	gwenharris65@gmail.com	757-898-8649

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, adairji@gmail.com.
- 2) Drop off at: Wild Wings Nature Store, Glendale Shopping Center in Newport News.
- 3) Drop off at: Wild Birds Unlimited, Kiln Creek Parkway in Yorktown.
- 4) 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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Editor (T. Charlock)
Hampton Roads Bird Club
22 Executive Drive
Newport News, Virginia 23606-2225

