



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 72, No. 2

November/December 2023

Thurs., Nov. 9 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Thurs., Dec. 14 Holiday Pot Luck
6:30 PM Appetizers 7:00 PM Dinner
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Adapting on the Wing: Managing a Coastal Urban Seabird Colony

By Jane Frigo

By Becky Gwynn

Becky Gwynn is Deputy Director of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, with responsibility for the Agency's fisheries and wildlife conservation and management programs, lands and facilities management, land acquisition, and capital programs. She joined the agency in 1988. Becky has an M.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Science from Virginia Tech and a B.S. in Biology from the College of William and Mary. In her spare time, Becky enjoys gardening, birding, quilting and reading.



I want to thank those who have brought refreshments for the meetings this year: September-Marilyn Adair and Charm Peterman; October-Wendy and Ellis Maxey. For November John and Marilyn Adair and Tina White have volunteered. The sign-up sheet will be passed around at each meeting so you have several opportunities to find one that's convenient. And kudos to VP Mark Sopko, who schedules our meeting presenters.

Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com
home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-792

The end of another year is just around the corner. The last meeting of the year is our annual Holiday Pot Luck Dinner! Members are asked to bring a dish to share that serves 8-10 people. This can be an appetizer, a side dish, main dish or dessert. A sign-up sheet will be passed around at the November 9 meeting. If you are planning to attend on December 14, please indicate both the number in your party and the dish that you will bring. This sign-up allows us to know how many places to set and ensure there is a variety of food. If you are unable to attend the November meeting but would still like to join us for the Holiday Pot Luck, please contact Jane Frigo (birderjane@gmail.com, home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-7925 cell) by Wednesday December 6, 2023. Anyone interested in helping with planning and setup please let Jane know. Everyone usually helps to cleanup at the end of the evening. This is always a wonderful time to visit with members and get caught up on various activities.

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

Grandview Beach (this page below)

7:00 AM Saturday, November 11, 2023

Leader: James Abbott jaa3469@gmail.com

757-320-9191 (text or phone)

Yorktown Beach TRIP UNCERTAIN

monitor www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org

Saturday, December 9, 2023

Leader: James Abbott jaa3469@gmail.com

757-320-9191 (text or phone)

Audubon Christmas Bird Count (below)

Saturday, December 16, 2023

Leader: Bill Boeh phrogdolph@gmail.com

(email preferred) or 757-951-7959

CBBT Islands or Dutch Gap

Saturday, January 13, 2024

Leader: James Abbott jaa3469@gmail.com

757-320-9191 (text or phone)

Back Bay Tram

Saturday, February 10, 2024

Leader: James Abbott jaa3469@gmail.com

757-320-9191 (text or phone)

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)

**Field Trip to Grandview Beach
7:00 AM Saturday, Nov. 11, 2023**

By James Abbott

The HRBC November 11 (Veteran's Day) field trip will be at one of our traditional birding hotspots, Grandview Beach. We will gather at the entrance (2 Adriatic Dr, Hampton, VA 23664) at 7:00 AM. This



Nashville Warbler by Dianne Snyder
Newport News Park on September 17, 2023

is a walking-heavy field trip and scopes are a good idea. I'll surely have mine along. Participants can walk as much for the beach as they feel comfortable. It is about 1.6 miles to the overwash. Dress for cooler temperatures due to wind on the beach. As always reach out to me at jaa3469@gmail.com or 757-320-9191.

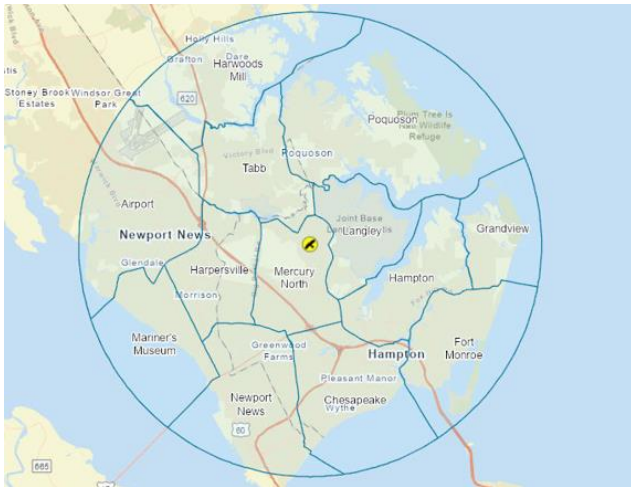
**2023 Audubon Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023**

by Bill Boeh

Please allow me to inform you regarding an opportunity to support an important bird conservation effort. Anyone can participate--even those who have mobility issues. That opportunity is the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC).

For those who are not familiar, the CBC is a bird census that has been conducted by the National Audubon Society since 1900. It is held annually from December 15 to January 5 within 15-mile diameter geographic “circles” in the U.S., Canada, and other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Each circle has a compiler who manages the count in their assigned circle. For more information visit the Audubon’s CBC web page at <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>.

As it has since 1952, the Hampton Roads Bird Club will be sponsoring the 2023 Audubon CBC. Our count will take place on Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023 (rain or shine) within the Newport News circle depicted below. The circle is divided into 13 sectors, each headed by a sector leader who coordinates the count in their sector.



There are two ways you can participate—by observing in the field or by feeder-watching. Field observers count birds in the field as part of a sector team (this can include “owling” as well as observing during daytime). Feeder watchers record observations at a feeder.

By participating, you act as a “citizen-scientist” by collecting data that is vital for bird conservation. According to the Audubon website, the data collected by observers over the past century has allowed Audubon researchers, conservation biologists, wildlife agencies and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys, such as the Virginia

Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space over the past hundred years. This long-term perspective is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat, and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well.

Why is this important? Birds are not doing well. According to Cornell’s [All About Birds website](http://www.allaboutbirds.org), wild bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada have dropped by almost 30% since 1970 - a 2.9 billion decline in bird populations in the continental U.S. and Canada.

Finally, please be aware that you may be able to participate in multiple counts, since there are other circles nearby that conduct their counts on various dates. Go to <https://tinyurl.com/svote8z> to view a map of CBC circles. Zoom in on our region and click on neighboring circles to view the count date and compiler’s contact information.

So please be part of this great tradition and support this important citizen science effort. It’s great fun and a meaningful way to help bird conservation efforts--and for those new to Hampton Roads, a terrific way to be introduced to some of the best birding sites in our region. Sign up by emailing me at phrogdolph@gmail.com (preferred method) or by phone at 757-951-7959. Please advise in your email whether you’d like to participate in the field or by feeder-watching.

President's Perch

By Shawn Dash

Greetings from "The President's Perch"! As the brisk winds of late fall begin to rustle through the trees, it's the perfect time to gather and share our avian adventures. I hope this letter finds you well and ready for some feathery reflections.

In the fading light of autumn's call,
A sea of blackbirds, a winged squall.
Crows in chorus, a raucous cheer,
Late fall whispers as geese draw near.

The shifting seasons bring not just a change in weather but also a flurry of activities within our club. From field trips that uncover hidden birding gems to cozy Sunday park walks, our community

has been buzzing with the joy of discovery. Your enthusiasm and participation have been the heartbeat of these gatherings.

Yet, as the leaves fall, we are reminded of the importance of nurturing not just our club but also our commitment to bird conservation. This season, we extend a warm invitation to join us in our efforts to support an icon of American birding—the Eastern Bluebird. Our Bluebird Trail project is seeking dedicated helpers to ensure the continued success of these beautiful creatures in our local habitat.

Looking ahead, we have exciting programs lined up, and we're eager to hear your thoughts. What workshops would you like to see? Sparrows, the mysterious LBJs, or perhaps a session on utilizing technology like eBird and Merlin for a more enriching birding experience? Your input is invaluable and will guide the upcoming events.

As the seasons change, so does our club, and we encourage each one of you to bring more friends into our feathered fold. The more, the merrier—let's make our birding community a vibrant tapestry of shared passion.

Soon Feederwatch will begin, if you have not been involved in the past it is a wonderful way to relax while doing a bit of science. There are many feederwatchers in the group so just ask around if you wish or a quick Google Cornell Feederwatch will fill you with all the information you need.

In closing, remember that late fall and early winter offer a unique window to explore the wonders of birds and nature. As the days grow shorter, let's make every moment count. Get out, breathe in the crisp air, and savor the beauty of autumn as it gracefully transitions into winter.

Local Birding News

By Jane Frigo

Bluebird Boxes

HRBC has long played a role in monitoring nest boxes for Eastern Bluebirds during the breeding season in Newport News Park; some say they contributed to the repopulation of the species in the lower Peninsula. But many boxes are now in a poor state. Ellis Maxey emaxey@verizon.net is leading a recovery effort.



Red-eyed Vireo by Dianne Snyder
HRBC Chincoteague field trip of Sept. 30, 2023

Ellis and Wendy Maxey and CL Tanner have very recently done a great job of surveying the Deer Run Golf Course bluebird boxes. They made a list of boxes, repairs needed etc. The Boy Scouts, under Dave Singletary, are to construct several boxes. Whether they meet the criteria for our trail or not will have to be seen. Club member Bryan Barmore gave an excellent presentation to the Boy Scouts on October 21 at Canon. Then, Bryan Barmore, Mark Sopko, Bill Boeh and Jane Frigo helped the scouts take a bird walk around the Canon campus. Scouts took home materials and directions to construct a bluebird house and bring it to their next meeting for inspection and completion of requirements for a patch. So, progress is being made to get the trail back in shape.

Osprey Chicks

Recall that Dr. Bryan Watts of William and Mary has reported the drastic failure of Osprey chicks near our area. It's likely due to current industrial-scale overfishing of Menhaden, a key Osprey food source, within the Chesapeake Bay; we're the only East Coast state allowing such. Virginia industry at Reedville already takes 2/3 of its Menhaden from the broader ocean, rather than the Bay. A petition to that advocated restrictions on commercial fishing of Menhaden in the Bay was rejected by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) on October 24; club members Laura Mae and Tom Charlock spoke for the petition, as did sport fishermen. Virginia Mercury, an online news source, described on October 25 a prospective scientific study that may shed light on this issue.

Embracing Winter's Ecological Tapestry: A Nature Lover's Odyssey

By Shawn Dash

In my childhood, I conceived the idea of starting my own nature club—a colossal endeavor with a membership list spiraling out of control, comprising my younger brother and our neighbor Amanda. Fueled by precocious curiosity and armed with nature activity books from the '50s and '60s, along with materials from my mother's venture into school supply marketing, I formalized the "Scales, Feathers, and Extra Legs" club. Our headquarters? My bedroom, adorned with a cabinet of curiosities to house our discoveries, art supplies out the whozzle (I will let you figure out where that is), and promise for adventures.

Those days exploring the "fields" of Baltimore—reclaimed parks born from trash dumps, along the Patapsco River, and in the woodland fragments of a burgeoning city—imbued in us the essence of nature. We felt its pulse, witnessed animals, tuned into the rhythm of seasons, savored botanical wonders, and embraced the present. While Amanda and my brother grappled with commitment issues, I was all in, a dedication spanning over 30 years. The spirit of

nature seeped into my soul, compelling me to kindle a similar passion in others—not just the superficial interest of an 8-year-old but an impactful connection to science--ecology.

My desire is to catalyze a shift in perspectives—urging all to think more like ecologists. To perceive the world as an intricate tapestry of networks and relationships where no organism stands alone; all are tethered to others. As winter's certainty looms, we have a golden opportunity to practice ecological thinking and become amateur ecologists ourselves. My thought, through these words, is to inspire you to craft a plan to engage with winter actively. Don't merely be a passenger as we traverse the season; instead, embrace the chill with intention.

As an academic and bibliophile, I believe the best starting point is books. While they may pale in comparison to direct experiences, knowledge wields power, and the light it casts illuminates our experiences. So, let's construct a winter ecology library. With the holiday season approaching, why not? After all, you may just get some nature-themed gifts, assuming you've been good all year.

Our approach to this winter "course" (almost a semester at 12 weeks) involves acquiring two sets of books: background and theory books, and field guides. A must-have in the former category is Bernd Heinrich's "Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival" (2009). This book seamlessly blends easy-to-understand language with a wealth of solid science, akin to sitting around a campfire sharing tales of adventures in nature. It serves as the perfect starting point. If, like me, your eyes are drawn to the ground in search of scat and tracks, you know of Halfpenny. James Halfpenny's "Winter: An Ecological Handbook" provides a naturalist's perspective on the season especially related to the rhythms of cycles from hibernation to the waiting for spring. For a comprehensive textbook to guide your self-directed course, Peter Marchand's "Life in the Cold: An Introduction to Winter Ecology 4th edition" stands out—detailed, well-organized, firmly rooted in science, yet far from a dull compilation of facts. During my self-proclaimed presidency of the nature club, I stumbled upon a gem—Donald Stokes and Deborah Prince's 1976 "A Guide to Nature in Winter: Northeast and North Central North America." Despite somewhat unsophisticated images, it offers a spectacular overview of winter, rich in natural history from snowflakes, weeds, and trees to of course birds.

For the bird enthusiasts among us, Roger Pasquier and Margaret La Farge's 2019 "Birds in Winter: Surviving the Most Challenging Season" delves deep into the science and research behind our feathered friends. Though a tad intimidating, the wealth of knowledge gained is worth the journey. If you prefer lighter bird reading, fear not; Bernd Heinrich's 2014 masterpiece, "Ravens in Winter," seamlessly weaves subtle science into an intriguing tale of bird behavior and the iconic.

A great course demands not just readings but engagement with the knowledge. So, rise from your reading nook and venture into the winter landscape. Observe as these authors have. How has what you read influenced your perception of winter? To aid in your winter ecology field trips, a few field guides will prove invaluable. In winter, when birds are elusive, mammals hunker down, and snakes and frogs slumber, there's no excuse not to observe plants. They remain still, affording the naturalist ample time for careful study. Bill Harlow's 1959 classic "Fruit Key and Twig Key to Trees and Shrubs" is a must, a pocket-sized guide to deciphering twigs and making sense of naked trees. Another gem used in my botany courses is Core and Ammos' "Wood Plants in Winter: A Manual of Common Trees and Shrubs in Winter in the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada" Need a compact companion for your car or backpack? The Watts "Winter Tree Finder" from Nature Study Guides is your trusty sidekick. While not overly complicated or robust, it efficiently accomplishes 80% of the identification job. Simple, easy to use, though it may feel somewhat limited and occasionally yearn for more information or illustrations. Another gem from Nature Study Guides is Miller and Amendolara's "Winter Weed Finder: A Guide to Dry Plants in Winter." This small, compact guide is a treasure trove of information. Keep it snug in your coat pocket, ready to be unfurled during a leisurely walk or a peaceful bench session in the coming months. Discover what you might have overlooked.

I trust this succinct set of reviews and suggestions will ignite the spark for you to craft your own winter semester, brimming not just with birds but also winter ecology. Our learning objective? To think ecologically, not only by the fireside but in the crisp air of our winter world.

Fall Photo Contest Winners

By Michael Meyer

September



Allen's Hummingbird
Gold by Pete Peterman

Pete: "Concerning the photographs, it is always a pleasure to visit my sister-in-law in San Diego. She lives on the top of a ridge with wonderful trees and gardens around that attract birds that we don't get out east. The photos were taken with a Nikon Z50 mirrorless camera with a Nikkor 100-400mm lens with a 1.4x extender giving 560mm total. I was testing out this combination for my trip to Australia and Papua New Guinea as it weighs less than my normal D500 with the 200-500mm lens. Both were shot at f/8 and 1/1000 sec. The ISO for the Allen's since it was in the shade was 1250. Allen's Hummingbirds were very abundant and fought over the many flowers but there were a few Anna's Hummingbirds as well but none that posed like this Allen's."



Common Sandpiper
Silver by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The Common Sandpiper was at the end of my boat ramp in the back yard just standing there resting for the longest time. It is so unusual for a Sandpiper to be still for that long!! It usually is running around on my seawall eating like crazy... All pictures were taken from my home on the Southern branch of Salter's Creek in downtown Hampton with my Nikon."



Green Heron
Tie for Bronze by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "This little Green Heron was feeding from my latest small snag in the water that I just put out this summer when the snag finally fell in the water out of my side yard."

October



Bullock's Oriole
Tie for Bronze by Pete Peterman

Pete: "The female Bullock's Oriole was in the sun with the Gold Medallion tree flowers and used an ISO of 400."



Common Yellowthroat
Gold by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The Common Yellowthroat was resting in the bottom of my Black Eyed Susan flowers in my front flower bed. I just happen to spot it when I walked into the room and it continue to sit there while I raised the window screen to get a shot! It knew it was just so pretty and we all had to see!"

We had four prizewinners for September. There was only one submission for October – and it was great. Thank you, ever patient and skilled photographers. 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.



Le Rubis (Ruby-throated Hummingbird) from Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle*, copper engravings showcased in “Birds”, edited by Fiorella Congedo, 2011 by Harper Design and loco publishing.

Reports for Sunday Walks in Newport News Park and Field Trips

By Bill Boeh (Bird Count Honcho)

Links to eBird trip reports for September and October 2023 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). Note—checklists often have photos! And a hearty thank you to Jane Frigo (Sunday walk leader) and James Abbott (field trip leader)

Sept. 30 was a field trip to the Eastern Shore and Oct. 7 was a field trip to Machicomoco.

Date	Species Obs.	Report Link
Sept. 3	45	https://ebird.org/tripreport/148374
Sept. 17	54	https://ebird.org/tripreport/148375
<i>Sept. 30</i>	-	<i>No report</i>
Oct. 1	51	https://ebird.org/tripreport/160554
<i>Oct. 7</i>	42	https://ebird.org/tripreport/160556
Oct. 15	58	https://ebird.org/tripreport/160555

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) produced a grand encyclopedia on animals and minerals in the French enlightenment tradition. Congedo’s “Birds” is a contemporary treasure; excellent on paper and featuring a DVD with hundreds of illustrations in JPG and PNG format; and a frequent source for artistic fillers in our newsletter.

Wikipedia informs that Leclerc’s father was a minor civil servant. With natural talent and good fortune, Georges rose to study law, mathematics and medicine, and he made an extended tour of southern France and Italy with a young member of the English nobility. He became an independently wealthy and influential scientist; and is credited with introducing calculus to probability theory. He calculated the age of the Earth as 75,000 years based on measurements of the cooling rate of iron in his laboratory.

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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
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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) 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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