



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

**Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)**

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

Vol. 65, No. 4

March/April 2017

## March 9 Meeting

**6:30 PM Social    7:00 PM Program**  
at Sandy Bottom Nature Park

### "Jewels of Ecuador: Hummers, Tanagers, and Antpittas"

By Pete Peterman

Pete and Charm Peterman traveled to Ecuador from 20 January thru 7 February, 2017. They saw over 450 species to include 65 species of Hummers, 86 species of Tanagers and their allies, and 8 Antpittas. Ecuador is the winter home for many of our Neotropical species, such as Blackburnian Warbler, Swainson's Thrush, and Broad-Wing Hawk. Protection of their winter habitat is important if we are to keep these species viable. The program will cover a sample of the birds of the East and West ranges of the Ecuadorian Andes Mountains both north and south, the intermontane valleys, and the Choco lowlands in the northwest.

**Hosted by** Rochelle Colestock, Richard Hudgins, and Bill McCullough



Long-tailed Sylph (by Pete Peterman)

## April 13 Meeting

**6:30 PM Social    7:00 PM Program**  
at Sandy Bottom Nature Park

### "Birds of Peru"

By Dave Youker

Come enjoy an evening exploring some of the birds of Peru. Dave Youker will show some of the amazing birds that can be found in such places as the Amazon, Manu forest, Inca trail, Lake Titicaca and coastal Peru. With 1800 species, you're sure to find a bird that intrigues you.

**Hosted by** Tom Charlock, Ellis Maxey, and Becky Rose.

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We need another host (provider of light refreshments) for the May meeting; and volunteers for the June picnic. Please contact Wendy Maxey ([emaxey@verizon.net](mailto:emaxey@verizon.net) or 757-483-3003) or Jane Frigo ([birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com) or 757-873-0721).

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## HRBC Outdoors March/April

### Regular bird walks in Newport News Park

First and third Sundays of *every* month, 7:00 AM  
Meet in big parking lot behind the ranger station.  
Jane Frigo [birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com) 757-873-0721

### Field Trip to Grandview Preserve (see page 3)

Saturday, 7:00 AM, March 11, 2017  
Andy Hawkins [andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com](mailto:andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com)  
cell 757-870-9641

### Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp (see page 4)

Saturday, 7:00 AM, April 15, 2017  
Andy Hawkins [andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com](mailto:andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com)  
cell 757-870-9641



Snowy Owl at Assateague Beach 1/16/17  
(by Dianne Snyder)

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## President's Perch

By Shawn Dash

I would like to say only a few words this edition to save you time reading and encourage you to spend as much time as you can in the field, especially with the warm weather. This is the time to hone your skills of observation and bird; locating these feathered mini dinosaurs when the foliage is light but the activity is heavy. At least recently, the birds have started their morning chorus and are engaged in the typical behaviors of spring. While somedays may not be as bright and the days are still short we have time to practice our birding by ear. There are many computer sites that help with learning bird song, such as Cornell's Bird Song Hero (<https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/bird-song-hero/>) and some wonderful apps for smart phones such as LarkWire (<http://www.larkwire.com/>). There are also many wonderful audio guides on CD, and if you have not explored the guides from Cornell's Macaulay Library that might be a good place to start (<https://macaulaylibrary.org/guides>). For example, this is where you could purchase an audio guide to warblers to go along with *The Warbler Guide*, by Tom Stephenson and Scott Whittle. Of course, a search of Amazon or your local bookstore will produce Peterson Field Guides to Bird Song, Stokes Field Guide to Bird Song, and John Feith's Bird Song Ear Training Guide: Who Cooks for Poor Sam Peabody? By the way, during the first week in March the Peterson Field Guide series will release

the Peterson Field Guide to Bird Sounds of Eastern North America by Nathan Pieplow.

Perhaps, if you do not have any such guides, it is time to get yourself a "little something" and start listening. While studying at home on cold dreary days is great, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE study some outside where you can not only see the bird singing but hear it singing at the same time. Take on this task with strength and joviality and remember this, just sit, just listen, and learn. Many birders trek around looking for as many species they can see during a trip, but few just sit and observe. Sometimes the mission is not racking up a list or eBird score card, but taking some mindful moments to observe the species we see. Recall the Holmesian adage "you see but do not observe," and look over the bird completely even if you know the species. Ask yourself what you can learn from its behavior when it sings and calls. How does it move, where does it sing from, how often does it call, from where does it fly to and from, is it peaceful or aggressive, when it is aggressive what sounds does it make, how long does it stay singing or calling, will it respond to your pishing, does it watch for predators, and so on and so on. Forging the connection, a true connection, between the bird and the calls and song will make the learning process go faster and have more impact on your long-term learning and enjoyment.



Immature White Ibis at Back Bay field trip  
1/14/17 (by Shawn Dash)

This is a delightful time to act as a great Naturalist like Jane Goodall, planted amongst your study subjects watching with a keen eye, perhaps making notes in a field book or just in your memories. As you watch ask yourself what are the bird reproductive behaviors you know, why are there so many breeding behaviors and which ones have you observed? Consider who you are seeing, are they male (or female), are they flying by or moving about in suitable nesting habitat. If you don't know, well that is great. I think one of the joyous things in life is not knowing and having the chance to learn. Just checking your field guide frequently will answer that habitat question. Though if you are deeply interested (and this may be a belabored point) purchase either the National Geographic's Complete Birds of North America or Pete Dunne's Essential Field Guide Companion: A Comprehensive Resource for Identifying North American Birds. While I do not carry these books in the field, I make notes on birds that I need to look up and when I was first starting birding I would do a "debriefing" after my trips (I guess I was always trying to sound cooler than I was). I would look in those books to learn about the birds I had seen and read up on the species nesting sites, nest shape, how many eggs were laid, when they migrated, etc. Slowly you start to learn about your flying friends and, after all, if we buy all these books we should use them. While visiting various places around our area, or distant lands, or the field of our own backyard we can study and better appreciate our birds. While sitting out also consider how often the male sings, if he's been singing for a week or more, if you see courtship displays, or if the birds are pairing up and trying to mate. You have a real-time Discovery channel right in front of you, where you can be the explorer yourself. If you find that you are enjoying this aspect of birding perhaps consider becoming more involved with the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (<http://amjv.org/index.php/vabba2/about>) by talking to Dave Youker and see how you can contribute to this wonderful project.

I recognize I frequently come from the standpoint of a professor, but behind the bowtie, sweater vest, and heavy face of teaching there beats the heart of an explorer. I have found myself falling in love again, again and again with nature when I know more about it, when I can identify the whistle high in the trees, or the tree that call pierced the woodland from, or what caused the rustle at my feet. I encourage you to forge an affair with nature by knowing about it and

being part of it. Perhaps no time in human history has there ever been just an assault on nature as there is today, yet there is so much to know. So help out with breeding bird atlas or at least learn what you can and introduce others to the same adventures. The more of us that speak for the trees or the birds, the harder it is for them to disappear.



Tundra Swan at NC Outer Banks  
(by Virginia Boyles)

## **Field Trip to Grandview Nature Preserve**

**Saturday, 7:00 AM, March 11, 2017**

By Andy Hawkins

March is a transitional month and birding can be difficult. Water fowl are leaving and warblers and other summer breeders have not arrived yet. Therefore, Jason Strickland and I will lead a walk at Grandview Nature Preserve in Hampton concentrating on shorebirds on March 11. Some water fowl should be present, and the habitats of bay, beach, shoreline and scrub brush should produce a good species list of shorebirds and others.

We will meet at the gate of Grandview on State Park Drive in Hampton at 7:00 AM on Saturday, March 11. This trip will require some walking, but you have a choice. Jason Strickland (cell [757-739-6939](tel:757-739-6939)) will lead a walk to Factory Point and back. I will walk only about half way and then return to the

parking lot. My cell phone number is 757-870-9641, and if you have questions just call or email [andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com](mailto:andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com).

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## **Field Trip to Washington Ditch and Jericho Ditch of the Great Dismal Swamp Natural Preserve**

**Saturday, 7:00 AM, April 15, 2017**

By Andy Hawkins

The Great Dismal Swamp will be our April trip. Warblers, and a good variety of other breeders and migrants should be present. We will meet at the Washington Ditch (*about a dozen miles south of the usual first stop for a HRBC trip to the Swamp*) parking lot at 7:00 AM and spend a few hours there. When we get back to the parking lot, if anyone wants to try the Jericho Ditch, we can. There will be walking involved, but if one wants to sit near the parking lot much can be seen and heard. My cell is 757-870-9641, and call if you have questions.

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## **Town Hall Meeting to Discuss the Future of City Farm Waterfront**

**Monday, 7:00 PM, March 6, 2017**  
First Baptist Church, Warwick Blvd.

What's the upshot about the Newport News City Farm? There's about a km of waterfront along the James River and Deep Creek on the 58 acres of City Farm. It has spectacular James River views - no drawbridge towers, no existing or proposed powerlines, no shipyard cranes - and good birding. The land is owned by the City of Newport News and is formally zoned as parkland. City Farm is adjacent to well-used and safe "Riverview" Park, which despite its name lacks a view of river or creek. There are two more vital points:

*The public is **not** permitted to enter the grounds of City Farm.*

*Developers have made an unsolicited offer to purchase City Farm for high-end housing.*

The disposition of City Farm grounds will likely be determined by a vote of the full Council of Newport

News. We don't know, when they will decide the issue. In fall of 2015, our Secretary Bill Boeh initiated an on-line petition, "Don't let the City Farm fall into the hands of developers". Bill's effort has garnered over 1,700 subscribers. Numerous citizens have addressed the City Council and called for City Farm to be accessible to the public.

A meeting to discuss the future of the Newport News City Farm will be held at First Baptist Church, 12716 Warwick Blvd. at 7:00 PM on March 6, 2017. The URL is <http://saveriverviewfarmpark.com>. At the town hall meeting Councilman Bert Bateman, Councilwoman Pat Woodbury, and Adrian Whitcomb (President of Citizens for Riverview Farm Park) will answer questions that have been submitted to [RiverviewParkcitizens@gmail.com](mailto:RiverviewParkcitizens@gmail.com).



Fox Sparrow at NN Park 1/15/17 (by John Adair)

## **Report of Bird Count at Newport News Park (1/22/17)**

By Jane Frigo

On January 22, 2017 Hampton Roads Bird Club conducted a Winter Bird Count in Newport News Park. Five sectors were chosen which corresponded with areas normally covered on the Sunday park walks. Weather that day was miserable. Low hanging clouds and fog made for challenging identifications. Despite the weather, 42 species and a total of 1655 birds were tallied during the 3- hour observation (7 AM to 10 AM). Thank you to those

members who participated. They are Bill Boeh, Shawn Dash, Stuart Sweetman, Marc Nichols, Andy Hawkins, Anthony Nixon, Dave Youker, Jacob Hinton, Jane Frigo, Rock Moeslein, Marilyn and John Adair and Becky and Ned Rose.

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## **Report of Field Trip on 1/14/17 to Back Bay and False Cape on Tram**

By Andy Hawkins



Dune transients in focus (by Andy Hawkins)

On January 14, Jason Strickland and I led a birding trip to Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park. The federal Wildlife Refuge closes the East and West Dike areas during the winter months so the water fowl can rest, and there is no thoroughfare to False Cape State Park except to hike in on the beach or reserve the tram. We left the Back Bay Visitors Center at 9 AM, but while we were boarding the tram two American bitterns flew over. The morning was cloudy, but not bitter cold, and the rain held off. Highlights were the bitterns, nineteen American white pelicans, white ibis, one Lincoln Sparrow, three immature white-crowned sparrows and many ducks and swans.



White Ibis (by Andy Hawkins)

The complete species list follows: Tundra swans, gadwalls, wigeons, buffleheads, Canada geese, black ducks, mallards, northern shoveler, pintail, ring-necked ducks, hooded mergansers, ruddy ducks, wood duck, surf scoters, white-winged scoter, black scoter, red-throated loon, common loon, pied-billed grebe, cormorant, brown pelican, America bitterns, great blue herons, great egrets, coots, ring-billed gulls, herring gulls, northern gannets, American White Pelicans, white Ibis, king rail, sanderling, great back-backed gull, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, flicker, house wren, brown thrasher, white crown sparrows, Lincoln sparrow, swamp sparrows, northern harriers, bald eagles, mourning doves, kingfisher, blue jay, American crow, Carolina wren, robins, catbird, mockingbird, yellow-rumped warbler, white-throated sparrow, towhee, cardinal, red-winged blackbird, meadowlark, Carolina chickadees, golden-crowned kinglet, ruby-crowned kinglet, and many ducks and swans.

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## **Report of Field Trip on 2/13/17 to Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Islands**

By Andy Hawkins



Smilingly warm and sunny (by Andy Hawkins)

On February 13, twenty two of us met at the CBBT parking lot at 7:30 AM to take a tour of the three northern CBBT Islands. 60 F degree days and light winds not being the norm for February, we headed out at 8:00 AM unsure of what we would find. Fortunately, we were not disappointed. Possibly the numbers were not as great as in previous years, but the quality was indeed there.



Razorbill (by Andy Hawkins)

Highlights were a glaucous gull on the second island, razorbills on the second and fourth, king and common eiders on the fourth, long-tailed ducks on the second, third and fourth and loons, red breasted mergansers, purple sandpipers, great cormorants and scoters everywhere.



Long-tailed Duck (by Andy Hawkins)

All in all, a very nice, shirt sleeve morning in February. At eleven we split in two groups, some headed toward Back Bay in search of alcids, and some headed to Willis Wharf in search of godwits. I went to Willis, where we found godwits and willets.



Pete Peterman and Elizabeth Wilkins generously shared their optics but may have second thoughts about photons being “massless”



Glaucous Gull (by Andy Hawkins)

## **Kenneth Clark White**



At our 2013 picnic (from Virginia Boyles)

Clark White, who held many positions as a member of the Hampton Roads Bird Club, passed away at age 78 on January 8, 2017. A retired NASA engineer, he once served as a Vice President of the Cape Henry Audubon Society and was associated with the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Clark's wife, Marilyn White, was formerly a President of our Club. I do recall Clark's birding skills, but more especially his kind manner (and generous snacks).

|                        |                  |                               |                |
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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.** 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.

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**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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