



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 66, No. 4

March/April 2018

March 8 Meeting

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

“Watching Warblers”

This is a video guide to the warblers of Eastern North America. The DVD explores the lives of the 39 warbler species that nest in Eastern North America. Males sing and forage in their breeding habitats, and the video show warblers building nests and caring for chicks. At the end of the DVD is a review of all 39 species with the warblers singing. This should get the club ready for the spring migration.

Information/scheduling from Pete Peterman.

Hosts: Angie Herring, Becky Rose, and Dot Silsby



Magnolia Warbler (Wikipedia)

April 12 Meeting

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

The Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VABB2)

Presenter: Dr. Ashley Peele

The Atlas Coordinator, Dr. Ashley Peele, is an Avian Ecologist based at the Conservation Management Institute in Blacksburg, VA. The VABBA2 is a 5-year survey of all bird species breeding in the state. The data collected will be used to map the distribution and status of Virginia’s breeding bird community. Data collected for the VABBA2 tells us when – and in which habitats – birds are forming territories, building nests, laying eggs, and fledging chicks. Over 25 years have passed since the completion of the first atlas in VA, and many environmental changes have occurred. Climate change and other anthropogenic effects are rapidly altering the conditions that birds and other wildlife must cope with. Atlas surveys can assess how bird communities are responding to these changes. This is a citizen-science program, and birders from all over VA are needed to input the data. 2018 is the third year of the program. A workshop will be held on Saturday, April 14 to cover in more detail on how to enter the data in eBird. See Andy Hawkins’ plan for future HRBC field trips to cover VABB2 Priority Blocks, and Dave Youker’s further description, both on page 3.

Information/scheduling from Pete Peterman.

Hosts: James Abbot, Marilyn Adair & Brian Magill

HRBC Outdoors March/April

Regular bird walks to Newport News Park

First and third Sundays *almost (see ** below) every* month 7:00 AM. Meet in big parking lot behind Ranger Station.

Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com 757-873-0721

Field trip to Lone Star Lakes in Suffolk (page 3)

Saturday, 9:00 AM, March 10, 2018

Andy Hawkins cell 757-870-9641

andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com

Workshop to support Virginia Bird Breeding

Atlas 2 (VBBA2) see page 3

Saturday, *probably* 8:00 AM, April 14, 2018

Dave Youker youkerd@aol.com 757-344-9385

Andrew Hawkins cell 757-870-9641

andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com

One Shift in Date, Another in Location

By Jane Frigo

** Change in March 4, 2018 ** Regular Park Walk

Because of the All City Marathon scheduled for Sunday, March 4, 2018 and beginning at Newport News Park at 7:00 AM, the regular bird walk is being canceled and moved to Saturday, March 3, 2018. In doing so we can still maintain a relatively consistent inventory of the park. If you have any questions call Jane Frigo [757-873-0721](tel:757-873-0721).

June Picnic at Sandy Bottom

Another note to mark your calendar: the end of the year picnic will be held on June 9 in Hampton at the Parker Pavillion at SANDY BOTTOM NATURE PARK. This is a change of venue. The club provides hamburgers and hot dogs and guests bring a cover dish to share. A bird walk at the park will take place before the picnic. Anyone interested in helping with planning can contact Jane Frigo [757-873-0721](tel:757-873-0721).

President's Perch

By Shawn Dash

Early to bed, and early to rise is said to make a person wealthy, healthy, and wise. I guess I never go to bed early enough to reap the benefits of sound advice. However, over the last few weeks, you who are up early may have noticed a change in nature's soundtrack. With the warm temperatures, an early morning walk or a comfortable patio chair is the perfect vehicle to experience the rhythms of nature with the dawn chorus. This welcoming of the day is rooted deep in the biology of birds, this chorus is a means for males to set up territories as well as display dominance. While their songs fill the air with joyous melodies, there is no harmony in their message. They sing of ownership, they sing with heated warnings, they sing through pumped testosterone-fueled motifs. As the days lengthen, the ever-growing photoperiod results in male birds producing more testosterone as well as the development of their testis. So, too, these males sing to brag and boost their sexiness, their prowess, and why they should be selected for love. Coded in all of these songs is information about the health, power, suitability, and potential of a mate. I myself, often close my eyes, listening to the cacophony of songs and the jumbled messages of desperate males, hopeful love, and the success of finding a fit mate to produce the "best" offspring with, thus fulfilling my Darwinian obligation.

This dawn chorus is not haphazard or really a jumble of sounds. This is a well thought out symphony orchestrated through the concept of evolution. The tempo and tone, the loudness, the whistle, the warble, the rasp, and the duration are all products of evolutionary pressures. These same pressures have influenced the mating habits of all life on the planet. I sometimes do wonder, if I could travel in time to 93 million years ago, what would the Dawn Chorus sound like with early birds, or even that of their Dinosaur ancestors. Males look for the best positions to project their songs, to be noticed, and to stir fear in the hearts of competing males. Look for these birds perched high, broadcasting their ballads in clear areas and delivering their acoustic poems for maximum public consumption. We, too, the members of the HRBC use our newsletter, Facebook, and Website to reach you with messages about speakers, books, events, and projects. Please keep up with what we are doing in the community

and how we are celebrating nature by understanding our avian friends.

I hope you have been as excited as I in having wonderful speakers this year, wonderful adventures on our monthly field trips, and seeing as well as learning on the Sunday Walks. We want to see you and bird with you so make sure you join for these fun-filled events.

A lot of things are going on in the coming months so be sure to check in with Facebook and the webpage and join us for a meeting.

If you are interested in breeding bird behavior, please talk to Dave Youker about the Breeding Bird Atlas and how you can help the HRBC in its efforts to cover forgotten areas of the state.

geographical areas) will be “attacked in mass”. I will do the planning and organizing for the club’s field trip component of the VABBA2; and look forward to any questions you may have. Expect novelty: we plan to have some field trips in the summer months, or nocturnal trips that we normally would not be doing. This will be a good opportunity for club members who have not participated in the survey to accompany experienced Breeding Bird Atlas veterans and understand more of how the process works. See the announcement about VABBA2 on right column of page 1 and Dave Youker’s article below.

VABBA2 Workshop and Field Trip at Sandy Bottom

Saturday, 8:00 AM (?), Apr. 14, 2018

To participate, you must first register with Dave Youker youkerd@aol.com 757-344-9385. This event is described in the following article.

Spring and Summer HRBC Field Trips

By Andrew Hawkins

Field Trip to Lone Star Lakes in Suffolk

Saturday, 7:00 AM, March 10, 2018

On March 10 we will travel to the Chuckatuck section of Suffolk to the Lone Star Lakes. There are 11 lakes and the Nansemond River surrounded by trails and many different habitats. We will meet at the Newport News side of the James River Bridge parking lot at 7:00 AM, leave by 7:15 AM, and should start birding by 7:45 AM. There will be some walking on this one, so come prepared. For questions contact Andy Hawkins at 757-870-9641 or andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com

In April, May and June we will start new types of field trips working on the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VBBA2) survey. The Board of HRBC has recently committed us to jump midstream into the VABBA2 effort during this, the third year of the its program. Watch for emails from me andrewcurtishawkins@gmail.com and consult the HRBC webpage www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org as we plan which Priority Blocks (important

“Ready, set, go”: HRBC jumps into the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VABBA2) program in April

by Dave Youker

There are some exciting happenings within the world of the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VBBA2), and you can be proud of what your club is doing to support this initiative for conservation and citizen science! Our field trip coordinators, Jason Strickland and Andy Hawkins, will plan field trips over the next six months geared toward gathering breeding bird evidence (above). This year, we’ll also have trips in June, July and August. On April 12 the Atlas state coordinator, Dr. Ashley Peele, will be making a presentation to our club (page 1).

In addition, Ashley will conduct a workshop on Saturday, April 14. We **tentatively** plan to start at 8:00 AM at Sandy Bottom with a lunch provided. Stay tuned for more details on this as we get closer. This workshop will consist of part field work and part classroom session. The activities will walk you through the process of identifying and recording evidence of breeding bird behavior. If you were

unsure how this process works or whether you had the skills to be an “Atlaser”, come see how easy it can be to contribute to this important conservation effort. There will be a maximum number of attendees we can accommodate, so **reserve your seat** by contacting me at youkerd@aol.com or 757-344-9385.

Lastly and just as important, our club has committed to working the Priority Blocks in our region over the next 3 years. I can't understate the significance of this. It's a huge step forward in providing valuable data for the Atlas. The math works out to completing seven blocks each year, and your HRBC Board has already signed up for five of those blocks this year! We need your help in achieving this goal. If you'd like to help our club in this initiative, contact me for a Priority Block assignment.

The Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas 2 (VABBA2) is a collaborative project which involves the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO), and the Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources. Read more at the VBBA2 homepage <http://amjv.org/index.php/vabba2/about>

Report of Field Trip on 2/17/18 to CBBT Island 4 and the Eastern Shore

Field trip coordinator Andy Hawkins put in the labor of preparation for this event, collecting the driver's license IDs for the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) security authority with sufficient lead time for our police escort to be ready. But Andy couldn't join us for this one, so Jason Strickland was our solo HRBC leader for the day. With construction on Islands 1, 2 and 3, we had access only to northernmost Island 4.

Jason records us as parked on Island 4 at about 8:25 AM for an hour and a half of real bay birding. With a stiff easterly breeze and temperatures in the 40s F, we faced a chilly blue sky with scattered cirrus and contrails. Three female Harlequins were the only ducks to put on a persistent show very close to the rocks; the species is indeed fond of turbulent water. Most other birds kept their distance. Telescopes showed a few hundred of both Surf Scoter and Black Scoter. Jason noted 20 species for Island 4.



Jacques van Montfrans, Elizabeth Wilkins, Jason Strickland, Lisa Rose, Charm Peterman, Emmylou Kidder, Bill Boeh, Pete Peterman, Dianne Snider, Jane Frigo, Phyllis Roth, Stuart Sweetman, Dave Youker, and James Abbott at the CBBT entrance.

A stop at the muddy Cheriton Landfill in Northampton County revealed the usual suspects, with only Canada Geese, Black Vultures and Herring Gulls in significant numbers. By 11:00 AM the thickening clouds that would later shower us were evident to the west. The waterfront at nearby Oyster was also not rich for birding.



Snow Buntings (by Bill Boeh)

A drive westward to the Kiptopeke fishing pier, where Jason hoped to lead us to Snow Bunting, panned out beautifully. A pair of Buntings on a railing posed for the group; while a park ranger photographed us, lined up and enthusiastically snapping away, to show his boss. There were also close views of Greater Scaups and Red-throated Loons over the water. As songbird diversity has

been waning at Kiptopeke because of the dense plantings of pine several years back, most cars decided to forgo a stop over its woods and few remaining fields.



Enjoying Red-throated Loon at Kiptopeke

On to another waterfront, the beach at the town of Cape Charles, at lowering tide. Progress along the boardwalk, which had a thickness of sand that seemed to rival that of the adjacent dunes, was a slow trudge. A flock of American Oystercatchers were spotted on a then-distant sandbar a few meters from the shore. Approaching them, we became wary of a beach photographer who got so close, that we were sure she'd spook the whole lot. But the birds held fast to their little island, and we soon had a fine look at them. Sanderlings were mixed in. A few Dunlin punctuated the view.



American Oystercatchers and Sanderling at Cape Charles Beach (by Bill Boeh)

Light showers began. Our caravan was fragmented. At the last group destination, Willis Wharf, the Peterman's were the first to arrive. Their car was blocked by a tight party of barnyard geese, the kind with a sneering beak (guidebooks refer to this feature as a "grin"). Charm got out the car and attempted to shoo them away. They did budge, by way of chasing her back into the car. Confident of their rule of the street, they eventually allowed us to pass. We felt occasional drizzle and saw hardly any (wild) birds until Jason showed up. Here he reported 15 species, and over a hundred of both Marbled Godwit and Willet.



Greater Scaup at Kiptopeke (by Bill Boeh)

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Board: (7/16-6/19)	Dave Youker	Youkerd@aol.com	(757) 344-9385
Board: (7/17-6/20)	Walter Harris	walthh2@gmail.com	(757) 898-8649
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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 1st to August 31st. **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.

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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