



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 69, No. 5

May/June 2021

Thursday, May 13 Meeting
7:00 PM using internet Zoom
(Shawn will email link to members)

Bird Migration 2020
Brings Welcome Surprises!

By Dr. Jerry Via

Dr. Jerry Via, Professor Emeritus from Virginia Tech, and a long-time trip leader for the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO), presented this talk to VSO on February 28, 2021 on the status of our knowledge of bird migration. We have permission from VSO to see this recorded video that covers the current science. The talk provides information on the observed irruption of the finches this past winter. It covers the new monitoring technology and what it teaches us about some of the mysteries of migration, such as trans-oceanic migrants and also what factors might influence the migration of seabirds and waterfowl. The input of birders with eBird and Christmas Bird Counts provides a wonderful look at what our birds are telling us about migration and climate change.



Yellow-throated Warbler at York River State Park in April 2021 (by Dianne Snyder)

Saturday, June 12 Meeting
In-person at Newport News Park

8:00 AM Bird Walk

10:30 AM Presentation of Officers and Board for 2021-2022 at Shelter 8

By Jane Frigo

Join us for a walk of the White Oak Trail at 8:00 AM. Meet at the bridge that crosses over the reservoir near the Discovery Center. We will do the White Oak Trail Loop thru the Swamp Bridge and return to our cars and then travel to Shelter 8, which is behind the Ranger Station at Newport News Park, near the restrooms. There we will present the Board for next year. **Please bring your mask** and if desired, folding chairs and your own brunch/lunch to eat at the shelter. This is our first in-person meeting in over a year. We hope to see everyone there!

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
7:00 AM on 1st and 3rd Sundays all 12 months
Meet at big parking lot behind Ranger Station.
Leader: Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com
home 757-873-0721, cell 757-660-3405

Field Trip to York River State Park (this page)

8:15 AM on Saturday, May 8, 2021

Leaders: Harry and Rochelle Colestock

hcolesto@hotmail.com

804-840-7224 (text or phone)

Spring Big Day for Virginia (this page)

Anytime in Virginia on Saturday, May 15, 2021

Leader: Dave Youker youkerd@aol.com

757-344-9385

Migration Walks at Mariner's Museum Park

7:00 AM on last Sundays of May 30, June 27,

September 26, and October 31, 2021

Meet at west end of Lion's Bridge on Museum Dr.
in Newport News

Contact: Michael Meyer michael.meyer@cnu.edu

757-303-4790

White Oak Swamp Trail Bird Walk (page 1)

8:00 AM on Saturday, June 12, 2021

Meet at the bridge that crosses over the reservoir
near the Discovery Center in Newport News Pk.

Leader: Jane Frigo birderjane@gmail.com

home 757-873-0721, cell 757-660-3405

Field Trip to York River State Park 8:15 AM on Saturday, May 8, 2021

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 or text/phone at 804-840-7224. Please provide name and contact information.

•Timing: We will meet at 8:15 AM at the Park Headquarters at the end of the entry road. Parking is \$5 cash (exact) or check. Here is the website for the park with downloadable trail guides and other useful data- https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/york-river#park_trail_guide.

•The locations we will be visiting this trip include Taskinas Creek Trail, Mattaponi Trail, and Beaver Trail. These are walking trails with easy to moderate difficulty based upon length and elevation changes.

•Covid-19 social distancing and other health maintenance items set forth by the club will be strictly observed. See the paragraph in red font on the previous page.

•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 go.

Spring Big Day for Virginia Saturday, May 15, 2021

By Dave Youker

HRBC will be conducting a Spring Big Day of birding. Just like last Fall, it will be a virtual big day, and run the same way. Bird anywhere in Virginia, as long or short as you'd like. Then send me your list of species and location, and I'll report back to the Club with the total number of species. Unlike the Audubon Christmas Count and the last month's HRBC Spring Count, here you need not count the number of individuals for each species. Last Fall, we had a combined total of 138 different species...that's a good day of birding! By May, there should be a good supply of warblers in full breeding plumage. So whether you travel or just do your backyard, have fun and know that your Club is birding right along with you...virtually. If you have any questions, please contact me (youkerd@aol.com, 757-344-9385).



Red-cockaded Woodpecker in Sandhills, North Carolina, April 25, 2021 (by Ryan Walsh)

Report of Field Trip to Virginia Beach (3/13/2021)

By Harry and Rachel Colestock



It was another cold, windy morning when four intrepid birders (Dave Youker, Bill Boeh, the Colestocks) met at Little Island Park Saturday morning. The ocean was choppy, but we got glimpses of Horned Grebes, American Oystercatchers, Razorbills, Surf Scoters, Red-throated and Common Loons, and Red-breasted Mergansers. Northern Gannets and Brown Pelicans soared over the water in the morning sunlight. Double-crested Cormorants, Great Black-backed Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls clustered on the beach while a bevy of female Boat-tailed Grackles lined the pier. Away from the beach, birds were not in abundance; but we saw or heard Killdeer, Northern Mockingbird, Fish Crow, Yellow-rumps and a Gray Catbird, among others.

The next stop was Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The wind seemed to be hindering much bird activity, with Robins being the most common bird on the trails. Other sightings included a Northern Harrier, Kingfisher, Marsh Wren, Song Sparrow, Osprey, Bald Eagle and Yellow-rumps. Another hike to the beach revealed Sanderlings, more Gannets, Razorbills, Loons, Grebes and RB Mergansers.

Next, we tried the Harris Teeter retention pond, which had good results in recent weeks, but not when we went. A pair of Mallards swam in the pond and a beautiful Red-tailed Hawk soared over the

fields. Field and Song Sparrows were seen or heard, along with a Flicker, Fish Crow and Carolina Wren. Nearby at Sherwood Lakes had more water birds. We got a close view of a Kingfisher near the entrance and a distant view of an immature Bald Eagle. Red-breasted Mergansers, Ring-billed Gulls and a Common Loon were spotted on the lake. Incidental sightings included Song Sparrows and a Mockingbird. At that point, we concluded the trip and headed home.

Report of Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp (4/17/2021)

By Harry and Rochelle Colestock

The Colestocks met up with Bill Boeh, Dave Brown and Pete Peterman at 7:30 AM at the Jericho Ditch parking area. It was a lovely sunny morning with temperatures just right for birding. We set off to walk Lynn Ditch where Prairie Warblers were in abundance. We also saw or heard (mostly heard, due to the thick foliage) multiple White-eyed Vireos, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Prothonotaries, Northern Parulas and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. Two surprises were a flock of Cedar Waxwings and a flying Wood Duck. Next, we ventured a bit down Jericho, Hudnell and Williamson trails, which were much quieter than Lynn Ditch. Among the birds we saw or heard were Common Yellowthroats, Eastern Towhees, Great Crested Flycatchers, Yellow-throated Warblers and a Louisiana Waterthrush.



Left to right Pete Peterman, Dave Brown, Rochelle Colestock, and Bill Boeh (by Harry Colestock)

On the way back out on Jericho Ditch Road, we made multiple stops to see or hear a Hooded Warbler, a Black and White Warbler, Swainson's Warblers, Marsh Wrens, Yellow-throated Warblers and a flock of Rusty Blackbirds—the “bird of the day”.

On the way to Washington Ditch along White Marsh Road we saw Eastern Meadowlarks, a Red-shouldered Hawk and a Kestrel. On Washington Ditch road we heard an Ovenbird. The boardwalk provided another Ovenbird, a Pileated Woodpecker, Prothonotary, Palm and Hooded Warblers, Gt. Crested Flycatchers and a big surprise: we heard a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

By the time we started walking down the road towards Lake Drummond, it was close to noon and getting warm, so we did not go very far past the downed trees. The last few birds were Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Black and White Warblers, a Red-headed Woodpecker, more Prothonotaries and, finally, a Belted Kingfisher. We all agreed that it had been a good morning for birding.

Great Dismal Swamp species for (4/17/2021)

American Crow	Marsh Wren
American Kestrel	Mourning Dove
American Robin	Northern Cardinal
Belted Kingfisher	Northern Flicker
Black Vulture	Northern Parula
Black-and-white Warbler	Ovenbird
Blue Jay	Palm Warbler
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Pileated Woodpecker
Brown Thrasher	Pine Warbler
Carolina Chickadee	Prairie Warbler
Carolina Wren	Prothonotary Warbler
Cedar Waxwing	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Chipping Sparrow	Red-headed Woodpecker
Common Grackle	Red-shouldered Hawk
Common Yellowthroat	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Double-crested Cormorant	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Downy Woodpecker	Rusty Blackbird
Eastern Meadowlark	Swainson's Warbler
Eastern Phoebe	Tufted Titmouse
Eastern Towhee	Turkey Vulture
European Starling	White-breasted Nuthatch
Fish Crow	White-eyed Vireo
Great Blue Heron	White-throated Sparrow
Great Crested Flycatcher	Wood Duck
Great Egret	Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Hooded Warbler	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Louisiana Waterthrush	Yellow-throated Warbler

HRBC Photo Contest Winners March-April 2021



Fox Sparrow

Pete Peterman 1st Place March 2021

“The photograph was shot on March 7th at Newport News Park during the normal bird walk led by Jane Frigo. There was a pair of Fox Sparrows flitting about in the brush and one landed and posed. It was taken with a Nikon D500, 200-500mm lens, 1/1000 second, f / 5.6, ISO 320.”



Bald Eagle

Lynn Chandler 2nd Place March 2021

"After 23 years of watching Bald Eagles fly over Salter's Creek in downtown Hampton, an Eagle finally landed in a tree and sat for 30 minutes on Sunday, February 21! I was in the middle of a dinner party and everyone got to see him!"



Yellow-throated Warbler
Lynn Chandler 1st Place April 2021

"This little Yellow-throated Warbler was totally exhausted and rested on my deck for about 30 minutes and then flew away! I was so amazed how long he rested with very little movement right in front of me! I also have had a beautiful Black & White Warbler but he was working my Hackberry tree way too fast for me to get a picture and visited about 3 minutes!"



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Pete Peterman 2nd Place April 2021

"The photo was taken at Newport News Park on March 21st, during the normal bird walk led by Jane Frigo. The FOS [*first of season*] bird was spotted by Stuart Sweetman. The Gnatcatcher was quite active jumping between branches to glean insects off the leaves, making it difficult to obtain a clear shot between the foliage. The photo was taken with a Nikon D500, 200-500mm lens, 1/640 second at f/5.6, ISO 720."

Our photo contests will continue each month, including July and August, and the newsletter will feature the summer's pictures and winner's words when it resumes in the September-October issue. Shawn Dash and Michael Meyer run the HRBC contest. Here are the rules:

1. Each member may submit up to 2 photos taken in the last 60 days each month.
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. The photos will also be uploaded to Facebook <https://facebook.com/hamptonroadsbirdclub> as an album called "HRBC December Photo Contest," etc.
5. Members can vote for their 1st and 2nd favorite, via an online form sent to members by email.
6. Votes will be tallied on the 20th of each month and the winners contacted for a short write-up to accompany their photo in the newsletter.

"Clean Air Act saved 1.5 billion birds"

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/11/201124150845.htm

Word that since 1970 the North American bird population declined by 3 billion (Rosenberg *et. al. Science*, 2019) has spread around our community. Time series plots of local HRBC counts reported by our Bill Boeh in the March-April 2021 edition of BirdNotes echo those results. Now for the good news: A study (Liang *et al.*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2020) finds that but for the implementation of the Clean Air Act by the US, the loss of birds would have been even worse. Citizen science (eBird) was a vital resource in the Rosenberg *et al.* and Liang *et al.* investigations, and Cornell University was a leader in both.

The website ScienceDaily notes that Liang *et al.* "tracked monthly changes in bird abundance, air quality, and regulation status for 3,214 U.S. counties over a span of 15 years. The team focused on the NOx (nitrogen oxide) Budget Trading Program,

which was implemented by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to protect human health by limiting summertime emissions of ozone precursors from large industrial sources.” They deduced that ground-level ozone, a highly reactive molecule which triggers smog, harms the respiratory system of small birds and adversely affects their sources of food.

Most ozone is generated naturally and is found in the stratosphere. The lesser amounts of ozone in the troposphere are generated by industry, transportation and biomass burning, such as slash and burn agriculture. Ozone at any altitude protects life on earth by absorbing the most dangerous wavelengths of solar ultraviolet radiation, especially UVC, which can fry DNA.

Rumblings about the Seabird Nesting Sanctuary at Fort Wool

A fairly thorough article by Lisa Vernon Sparks this week in the Newport News *Daily Press* opens with

“Several historic groups want the state to rethink its plan to convert the parade grounds on Fort Wool into a sandy habitat for Virginia’s seabird colony — pushed out from its former nesting site by the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel expansion. Calling itself the ‘Coalition for Historic Fort Wool,’ the group sent letters to several state agencies to little avail, they said.”

The historic groups want a balance between their interests and those oriented toward nature. Historic interests would include maintenance to preserve the most notable facilities (a unique surviving WW II steel tower was mentioned) and some return of tourism.

Last year, in response to pressure from Virginia birders, Governor Northam had the state spend \$1.7 million to alter Fort Wool grounds and place sand-laden barges in a rescue operation for the nesting of 25,000 seabirds. Terry Cuthriell of HRBC led some of the lobbying. An article in last fall’s newsletter by Wendy and Ellis Maxey illustrated the fruits of the workers’ labor: Terns nesting in the sand. The program was organized by Department of Wildlife

Resources (DWR). The *Daily Press* quotes DWR biologist Becky Gwynn, “That’s still only about a quarter of the space the birds historically used when they were nesting on the south island. It’s a good place to start. This is definitely a temporary solution.”

Birds, Illness and Us

By Jack Daw

On April 1, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) posted a notice about a “Salmonella Outbreak Linked to Songbirds.” It told of 19 illnesses in 8 states and 0 deaths. And thank you, CDC, for reporting our casualties, rather than those of the birds. Salmonella has menaced Pine Siskins, which are mostly a cold season bird in Tidewater. As of April 30, CDC has not issued an update. Are we then home safe? Maybe for salmonella.

CDC advises that we clean bird feeders and baths once a week or when visibly dirty. Scrub with warm soapy water and remove dirt. Rinse. Soak in a solution of 9 parts water and 1 part bleach for 10 minutes. Rinse. Dry before refilling. Do all of this outside the house; or in a laundry sink or bathtub. Most importantly, **wash your hands** when done.

Covid-19 is an illness of principal concern. Last fall, Audubon provided Carrie Arnold’s excellent article on wild birds and global pandemics. <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/fall-2020/how-migrating-birds-could-warn-us-next-pandemic> “All human influenza pandemics begin with a strain of virus that evolved in wild bird populations. The virus doesn’t appear to harm the wild birds, but it can occasionally spread to other animals and jump to people.” Such happened in 1918. The great beach centers of poop from migrating seabirds are described in the article. Ahem, should we speculate about backyard bird feeders, too? **Let’s wash our hands.**

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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) <New> 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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