



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org and on Facebook

Vol. 72, No. 1

September/October 2023

Thursday, September 14 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Discussion of Bluebird Trail maintenance.

Presentation TBD

Refreshments for our September meeting will be provided by Charm Peterman and Jane Frigo. Jane, as Hospitality Chief, needs a roster of saints to magic the goodies for subsequent monthly gatherings. She can be reached as birderjane@gmail.com home 757-873-0721, cell 757-776-7925

Thursday, October 12 Meeting
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Presentation TBD



Blue-gray Gnatcatchers by Dianne Snyder

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

Chincoteague / Eastern Shore (see page 2)

7:30 AM Saturday, September 23, 2023

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

Machicomoco State Park (see page 2)

7:30 AM Saturday, October 7, 2023

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

Grandview Beach (see page 2)

7:00 AM Saturday, November 11, 2023

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

Yorktown Beach

Saturday, December 9, 2023

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

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 Chincoteague and Eastern Shore

7:30 AM Saturday, Sept. 23, 2023

By James Abbott

The Hampton Roads Bird Club will kick off the club year with its September 23 field trip to Chincoteague and the Eastern Shore. There is no better place to see birds in VA during September than Chincoteague. Sunrise will be around 7:00 AM and it is about 2.5 hours to Chincoteague from Hampton Roads. I would encourage folks to meet and carpool either locally at the Bass Pro Shop in Hampton or at the Eastern Shore of Virginia Welcome Center just over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT). We will meet at the refuge visitor center (**8231 Beach Blvd.**) at 7:30 AM. Low tide in Tom's Cove at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge will be at 8:50 AM. We will bird around the refuge and town until lunch. Official field trip hours will be 7:30 AM-Noon.

I will pop into Black Narrows Brewing to get their Piney Grove Longleaf IPA with the Red-cockaded Woodpecker on the can. I will then hit some birding spots down the shore with my last target at Oyster Harbor around 5:30 PM. As always please reach out to sign up or ask questions at jaa3469@gmail.com or 757-320-9191.

Field Trip to Machicomoco State Park

7:30 AM Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023

By James Abbott

On October 7 the HRBC will visit Machicomoco State Park, following that wonderful presentation about the park we had last year. We will meet at the Park Interpretive Area (**3601 Timberneck Farm Rd, Hayes, VA 23072**) at 7:30 AM. There are several trails, waterfront/marsh, and grasslands to search for birds. Trip time will be from 7:30 AM-Noon. As always please reach out to sign up or ask questions at jaa3469@gmail.com or 757-320-9191.

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 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 area. It is 3 miles to walk to the end at Factory Point. Dress for cooler temperatures due to wind on the beach. As always reach out to me at jaa3469@gmail.com or 757-320-9191.

President's Perch: A New Season of Exploration and Connection

Dear Members and Friends of the Hampton Roads Bird Club,

As the sun sets on summer and the cool breeze (wishful thinking I know) of autumn approaches, I am delighted to welcome each and every one of you to the beginning of another exciting season of club meetings and birding adventures. It is my pleasure to extend my warmest greetings and heartfelt appreciation to all of you, the pillars of our vibrant avian community.

Our club is more than just a gathering of like-minded individuals; it is a family united by a shared

passion for birds and the natural world. I am truly grateful for the dedication and unwavering support of our dedicated board members and club membership. Your commitment, your tireless efforts, and your boundless enthusiasm bring life to our club and make it a welcoming space for all.

This season, let's renew our commitment to fostering a sense of camaraderie and discovery. I encourage each of you to extend an invitation to your friends and family, welcoming them into our fold. Our meetings and bird walks are not just opportunities to learn and observe but also moments to share with our loved ones, deepening our connections to each other and to the remarkable world of birds.



Summer Tanager by Dianne Snyder
HRBC Sunday walk May 7, 2023

As stewards of our local environment, our club plays a vital role in supporting educational and research efforts that contribute to the health of our bird populations and the broader Chesapeake ecosystem. Through our dedication as citizen scientists, we leave an indelible mark on conservation efforts. Every bird we identify, and every piece of data we collect, is a step forward in safeguarding the beauty and diversity of our natural surroundings.

The upcoming months promise an array of engaging activities that cater to all interests. From captivating guest speakers who will broaden our perspectives, to skill-building sessions that enhance our birding techniques, to movie evenings that inspire and entertain. Our travel logs will take us on incredible journeys, allowing us to experience birds in diverse habitats and expand our horizons. And let's not forget our monthly field trips and two bird walk

meetings per month, providing ample chances to immerse ourselves in nature and deepen our understanding of the avian world.

To truly make the most of this year, I encourage you to be active participants in our club's activities. Attend our meetings and walks, bringing your friends and family along to share in the joy of discovery. Spread the word about our club and extend a warm invitation to newcomers, inviting them to join us on a field trip or at a meeting.

Looking ahead, let us also reaffirm our commitment to bird research, community outreach, and the simple joy of enjoying birds together. By sharing our knowledge, engaging in community service, and immersing ourselves in the beauty of our natural surroundings, we create a legacy of impact that stretches far beyond ourselves.

As we embark on this new season, I am excited for the opportunities it holds and the memories we will create together. Let's seize every moment, engage with boundless curiosity, and cherish the friendships that make our club truly special. Thank you for being a part of the Hampton Roads Bird Club. Here's to a season of discovery, connection, and the shared wonder of birds.

With the warmest of wishes,

Shawn

September: Time to Pay Dues

by John Adair

September is the first month of the HRBC calendar year and the time to renew your membership. The HRBC board voted to keep the annual dues at \$15 for individual members and \$20 for family members. You can pay dues by cash or check (made out to HRBC) at the September 14 meeting, by mail to the treasurer, at Wild Wings Nature Store in Newport News, or at Wild Birds Unlimited in Yorktown. Additionally, you can open the Membership Page on the HRBC Website <https://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org/membership>

to pay by PayPal/Credit-Card. No form is required unless there are changes to your address/email/phone information. Please support your club and help your (volunteer) treasurer by renewing on time.

John Adair, 757-268-5446
HRBC Treasurer
109 Nansemond Turn
Yorktown VA 23693



A distracted Stuart Sweetman, smiling Dianne Snyder, engaged Ellis Maxey, Bill Boeh and Phyllis Roth. Way in the back, Todd Trousdell tells other vets that the Air Force is a corporation and the Marine Corps a cult.

Annual HRBC Picnic at Sandy Bottom



Senior birder Dot Silsby, 99, points out that she was only a graduate of William and Mary, rather than a founder. Phyllis Roth at left and Paul Roth on right.

Hospitality chief Jane Frigo put together a fun HRBC picnic at Sandy Bottom in early June. But we neglected to line-up and “introduce” the slate of officers and board members (no worries). And we forgo the traditional on-site grilling of meat burgers, thereby improving local air quality by a hair and shaving a bit off global warming. The gooey desserts were great.

Great Bird Books to Read

By Pete Peterman

I read three bird books this summer that I would highly recommend. First from the great author, Jennifer Ackerman, who previously wrote the “Genius of Birds” and “The Bird Way, A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent and Think” has come out this year with “What an Owl Knows: The New Science of the World’s Most Enigmatic Bird.” Birds are a part of everyone’s life, but owls are secretive and mysterious. They are difficult to observe, count and study. They are most active at night and during the early dawn. Due to their high canopy nests and protective coloration, owls are hard to detect. Some owls dig ground burrows and even they are difficult to find. The flight of owls is absolutely silent which makes them highly successful as predators.

Owls are ubiquitous in art and folklore of many countries. In some cultures, an owl sighting is considered fortuitous and in others an omen of doom or even death. The actions of humans have threatened the very existence of owls. Deforestation, overuse of rodenticides, climate change, urbanization and the purposeful killing of owls for

medicine or cultural rituals have reduced the population of owls worldwide. Ackerman brings these elusive creatures into the light. Every page has a new fact, insight or remarkable story. These are related with charm, wit, and wonder. The range of owl life cycles and behaviors is truly remarkable and well illuminated by this book.

The second book is “The Feather Thief” by Kirk Wallace Johnson. It has been out since 2018 but I finally got around to read it. It deals with a group of fishing fly-tiers that are obsessed with replicating flies from the Victorian era that used rare bird feathers before laws were passed that severely curtailed access to these feathers due to the massive slaughter of birds for women’s fashion.

The book starts with Alfred Russel Wallace, a British Naturalist who is known as independently from Darwin coming up with the Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection. Some of his bird skins end up at the Natural History Museum in Tring, England that was built by Lionel Walter Rothschild. One obsessive fly-tier decided to steal bird skins from this museum and the book details how he did it and how he eventually got caught and the effects the loss of these irreplaceable bird specimens had. The author is a great storyteller that spins the history, the act of the ‘heist of the century,’ and the detective story in an outstanding way.

The third book is “A Wing and a Prayer, The Race to Save Our Vanishing Birds” by Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal that just came out this year. The authors are professional journalists that are also birders. The publishing of the report in the fall of 2019 that a full third of North America’s birds had vanished over the past fifty years spurred the authors to embark on a journey covering more than 25,000 miles, mostly in an Airstream trailer, reporting on developing technologies, contentious politics, and new conservation approaches in order to save birds from extinction.



Black Skimmer by Pete Peterman

They cover stories such as the Florida Grasshopper Sparrow, which is the U.S. mainland’s most endangered species, on how scientists have learned to raise them in captivity to rebuild the species. They travelled to Hawaii to report on the effort to release lab-bred mosquitos to save the island chain’s last forest birds. And they went to California’s Sierra Nevada mountains where foresters are using artificial intelligence to listen to every hoot and call to protect the Spotted Owl. These are just some of the stories they cover. They also had a chapter that shows successes, such as Ducks Unlimited, protecting our water environments so waterfowl can thrive; and the military involvement in having habitat for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

But they also cover the enormity of the problem as no Federal Agency has stepped up to try and prevent further loss of birds. It is up to a small, privately funded organization called Road to Recovery (R2R) that has launched the first studies on four species: Evening Grosbeak, Golden-winged Warbler, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Lesser Yellowlegs. R2R hopes that the results of these studies will spur efforts to enlist existing organizations and government agencies, philanthropies, and conservation groups in other countries to join the rescue campaigns. Their afterword covers how each individual can help in the effort to save the birds.

Photo Contest Winners for the Summer Break

By Michael Meyer

We decided to establish four categories of winning pictures (Independent, Couples, Group, and Family) for the entire season rather than the routine of individual calendar months.

Independent



Western Scrub Jay
Gold by Don Brunk

Don: "Western Scrub Jay: I was in Big Bend National Park, driving in the Chisos Mountains when I saw several Scrub Jays moving about in the trees near the road. One perched long enough for me to roll my window down and shoot handheld with my Nikon Coolpix P900."



Grasshopper Sparrow
Silver by Pete Peterman

Pete: "The photo of the Grasshopper Sparrow was taken June 3 at Machicomoco State Park during the VSO Field Trip. I observed that this particular male liked to sing from this location outside the campground and waited for him to return to his spot. I used a NIKON D500 and a 200-500 mm lens at 1/1000 exposure at f 5.6 and ISO 250."



Prothonotary Warbler
Bronze by John Adair

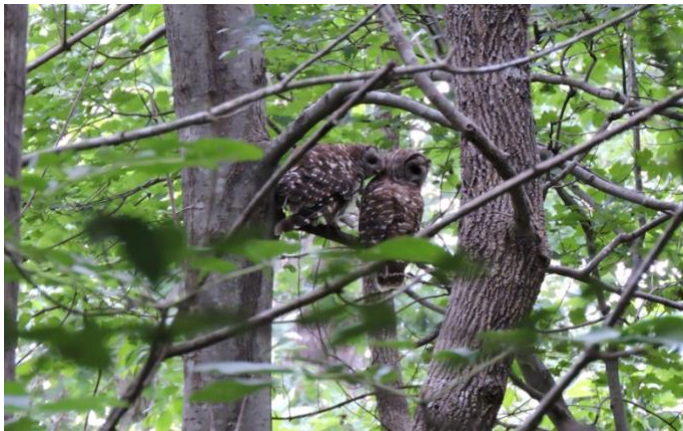
John: "This unusually cooperative Prothonotary Warbler was viewed by the HRBC Sunday NN Park walk participants singing loudly and catching a dragonfly at the NN Park Swamp Bridge. This photo was taken with a Nikon Coolpix P600."

Couples



Double-crested Cormorants
Gold by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "All pictures were taken from my back deck on the Southern branch of Salter's Creek downtown Hampton with my Nikon. Cormorants - the pair were across the Creek on a neighbor's floating dock in early Spring."



Barred Owls
Silver by John Adair

John: "The two Barred Owls were curiously interacting as the HRBC Sunday NN Park walk participants were viewing them through a spotting scope and binoculars on the White Oak Trail between the spawning pond and the Swamp Bridge. This photo was taken with a highly-zoomed handheld Nikon Coolpix P600."

Group



House Finch and Eastern Bluebirds
Gold by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The Bluebirds and House Finch were having a great conversation in my Crepe Myrtle snag and waiting on their turn for the suet & peanut butter in the month of June."



Mallards and Northern Pintail
Silver by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The Northern Pintail only visited his friends the Mallards for about an hour in April... All pictures were taken from my back deck on the Southern branch of Salter's Creek downtown Hampton with my Nikon... Yes, first time in 25 years I've seen a Pintail on the creek."

Family



Great Egrets
Gold by Laura Mae

Laura: "Great Egrets, Norfolk, VA 5/18/23. The day this photo was taken, we counted 53 nests in 5 of 12 nest trees all within a city block. Had we counted the nests in the other 7 trees, I expect the total nests in 12 trees would have been more than 100. That is consistent with prior years' totals. Their average clutch size is 1-6 eggs. Imagine the cacophony of several hundred nestlings and their busy parents! Additional info/photos are available here:" <https://ebird.org/checklist/S138243635>



Mute Swans
Silver by Laura Mae

Laura: "Mute Swan, Hudson, MA 5/25/23. I arrived before sunrise to find the two adult swans sleeping on the water. Their cygnets likely spent the night on

the back of their mother. These swans captured the hearts of many in their little New England town of 19,000 (people). A Facebook group is full of these swans' photos chronicling their feathered lives! My mother and I birded their pond each time I was there. Like most ponds, this pond hosts an array of avian and reptilian diversity. Additional info/photos are available here:" <https://ebird.org/checklist/S139258129>



Mallard Ducklings
Bronze by Lynn Chandler

Lynn: "The little Mallard ducklings were so funny crowding on this float in the month of July that marks a large tree I positioned out in the Creek for the wildlife. I have other pictures of four & five crowded on the float but this was the best one."

Rules for the HRBC photo contest remain as

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. 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.

Internet Data for "1st and 3rd" Sunday Walks

By Bill Boeh (Bird Count Honcho)

The results of the Sunday walks conducted this past summer are below. Walk summaries are also at <https://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org/sunday-walks> which has the same URL links to the associated eBird Trip Reports. Each link takes you to the brief of a particular Sunday walk in Newport News Park, the number of individuals seen for each species, and the associated eBird checklists. Some eBird checklists include on-the-spot photos by the very participants. Thanks are due to Jane Frigo (Sunday Walk Leader).

Date	Species Obs.	URL
May 21	67	https://ebird.org/tripreport/116368
June 4	47	https://ebird.org/tripreport/122870
June 18	53	https://ebird.org/tripreport/122871
July 2	55	https://ebird.org/tripreport/140261
July 16	51	https://ebird.org/tripreport/140262
Aug. 6	59	https://ebird.org/tripreport/148372
Aug. 20	47	https://ebird.org/tripreport/148373

Local Birding News

On May 17 several HRBC members attended a meeting, "Finding a Permanent Nesting Site for the Migrating Seabirds in Hampton Roads", sponsored by the York River Branch of the Sierra Club. Rebecca (Becky) Gwynn, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and George Janek, US Army Corps of Engineers, said that the present arrangement of facilitating nesting at Fort Wool, while somewhat successful, is only temporary. Viewgraphs from the meeting are at <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/york-river> under the heading "Our Blogs". An upbeat editorial in the August 28 Virginian-Pilot/Daily Press justified the \$10 million plan to resolve the issue by the construction of a new, permanent island for the migratory Royal Terns, Sandwich Terns, Laughing Gulls, Black Skimmers and others. A suitable location within about 13 miles of Fort Wool is sought.

Ospreys are in trouble in the lower Chesapeake Bay, though not just for the lack of nesting sites. Dr. Bryan Watts of William and Mary has reported to the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) that the survival rate of Osprey chicks in the lower Bay is now less than during the DDT era. Menhaden, which are fished at industrial scale from Reedville, are a key source of their food. VMRC has not met the request from Watts, Audubon, HRBC's Jacques van Montfrans and others to reduce the catch. The Virginia Mercury writes that a court judgement is expected on September 7. Environmentalists and sport fishing interests seem to be on one side, and several hundred professional fisherman and Attorney General Miyares on the other.

Birding needs a next generation, too. Bill Boeh, Shawn Dash, and Jane Frigo fostered that cause by running a HRBC booth during the Pawpaw festival at Endview in Newport News on August 26.



Jane Frigo and recruits at the Pawpaw Festival.
(By Shawn Dash)

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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
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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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Editor (T. Charlock)
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