



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

***Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)***

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

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Vol. 69, No. 3

January/February 2021

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## **January 14 Meeting**

**7:00 PM using internet Zoom**

(Shawn will email link to members)

### **Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird**

By Katie Fallon

Vultures are often overlooked, underappreciated, and unloved, despite the vital role they play healthy ecosystems. Worldwide, vultures are more likely to be threatened or endangered than any other group of the raptors, but in the United States Turkey and Black Vultures may be increasing in number. Based on Katie Fallon's recent book, this fun presentation will discuss the life and times of the noble Turkey Vulture, including its feeding, nesting and roosting habits, migratory behaviors, and common misconceptions.

**Katie Fallon** is the author of the nonfiction books *Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird* (2020, 2017) and *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird* (2011), as well as two books for children. She is a founder of the [Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia](http://www.avianconservationcenterofappalachia.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the region's wild birds through research, education, and rehabilitation, and has served as President of the [Mountaineer Chapter of the National Audubon Society](http://www.mountainchapter.org). A member of the International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators, Katie has worked with birds since 1998; over the last twenty years she has given educational presentations featuring live raptors, vultures, parrots, and corvids. She is also a columnist for *Bird Watcher's Digest* and has taught writing at West Virginia University, Virginia Tech, and elsewhere. Her first word was "bird." For more: [www.katiefallon.com](http://www.katiefallon.com).

## **February 11 Meeting**

**7:00 PM using internet Zoom**

(Shawn will email link to members)

### **Birds in Our Yards: Helping Nature's Pairing**

By Jeff Wright

Climate change is having an impact on seasons, birds, and plants across Virginia. In this class you'll learn how you can fine tune your yards features and plantings to attract, enjoy, and help a wider variety of birds, while at the same time sharing observations about your yard to help science and conservation within Virginia.

**Jeff Wright** is a Virginia Master Naturalist and a former President of the Northern Neck of Virginia Chapter. He is the Vice President of the Friends of Dragon Run. He is a member of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO), the North American Blue Bird Society (NABS), the Northern Virginia Audubon Society (NVAS), the Northern Neck Audubon Society, the American Birding Association (ABA), and the North American Butterfly Association (NABA). Among his favorite philanthropic institutions supporting birds are The Nature Conservancy, American Bird Conservancy, and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He serves as a county coordinator for the Old Growth Forest Network, Compiler for Butterfly Counts and Christmas Bird Counts, and as a Trail Monitor for The Nature Conservancy in Virginia.

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Speakers and information for HRBC meetings  
arranged by Vice President Pete Peterman.

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## 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

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

### Field Trip to Beaverdam Park (see this page)

Saturday, 8:30 AM, January 16, 2021  
Leaders: Harry and Rochelle Colestock  
[hcolesto@hotmail.com](mailto:hcolesto@hotmail.com)  
804-840-7224 (text or phone)

### Newport News Park Winter Count (see this page)

Saturday, 7:00-10:00 AM, January 30, 2021  
There will be leaders for each of 5 sectors.  
Organizer: Jane Frigo, home 757-873-0721,  
cell 757-660-3405, [birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com)

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## Field Trip to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester County

**8:30 AM, January 16, 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](mailto:hcolesto@hotmail.com) or text/phone at 804-840-7224. Please provide name and contact information.

•Timing: We will meet at 8:30 AM at the parking area at the main entrance to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester County (via Roaring Springs Road, route 616).

•The locations we will be visiting this trip include the immediate shore area south of the parking

area and a portion of the park trail north of the parking area. This should take about two hours. An optional location afterward is Beaverdam Park North Entrance and Loop One trail.

•Covid-19 social distancing and other health maintenance items set forth by the club will be strictly observed. See the first paragraph at the top of the column on the left.

•Anyone who goes on a waiting list for this trip and is not selected to go will have priority for the next scheduled trip, if they choose to go.



Female Belted Kingfisher at Chincoteague  
(by Dianne Snyder)

## Newport News Park Winter Bird Count in 5 Sectors

**7:00-10:00 AM, January 30, 2021**

By Jane Frigo

The past year, 2020, has been a challenging one. Let's hope we are able to return to some sort of normalcy in the new year. The Hampton Roads Bird Club is going to continue the Newport News Park Winter Bird Count. This year's count will be held on January 30, a Saturday. The Saturday date is being chosen to encourage participation by those club members who are unable to attend the regular Sunday walks. This count is like the Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC), where the numbers of individuals are recorded for each of the separate species observed. Since Newport News Park does not fall into any of the Audubon CBC circles and

HRBC regular bi-monthly walks only record the names of species observed (not counts of individuals), this activity can provide information about the health of populations.

As in previous years, there will be 5 sectors, each with a leader who is responsible for keeping the count on ebird software. The sectors are:

Section 1: Campground

Section 2: West of Constitution Way  
(Ranger Station Lakeside)

Section 3: East of Constitution Way  
(Arboretum/Discovery Center)

Section 4: White Oak Trail  
(Swamp Bridge to Spawning Pond)

Section 5: Golf Course/ Bluebird Trail

Contact me by phone or email (home 757-8730721, cell 757-660-3405, [birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com)) if you are interested. Hopefully we will have enough response to complete the count. The groups will meet at the large shelter by the Ranger Station at 7:00 AM to review assignments. The groups will return to the shelter by 10:00 AM to share coffee and donuts and discuss the morning's sightings. This is an easy, fun activity that can be conducted safely under the **Covid-19 social distancing** restrictions

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## President's Perch

By Shawn Dash

Welcome to a New chronological Year. Most regional birds have their life histories still plugging away surviving the cold of winter; and new spring is some months off. However, owls and eagles have already started a "new year" with pair bonding, nest-making, and some already to lay eggs. I have always been curious about the relative nature of time. The biological clocks and natural time. Some creatures like the long lives of Greenland sharks or welwitschia of Namibia always sparked my interest. With my research focused on insects I learned some complete their life cycles in a few weeks while others may take a decade or more. Some birds have

short lives such as the black-capped chickadees living a year or two and house sparrows fair a bit better with two to three years. Though Wisdom, a Laysan albatross who hatched around 1951 is the oldest wild bird in the world. With tales of parrots being inherited after their original owners have long moved on. Though for most life forms only a short episode is experienced among the colossal grind of geological deep-time. For many, this last year has felt like "deep-time" pushing changes in our lives and upsetting a balance that we have grown accustomed to. We experience when the world stood back for a few months, nature rebounded quickly and started to heal, but human progress and expansion soon halted that progress. Yet, nature finds a way and is always ready to spring into action and flourish; to live on.

The Hampton Roads Bird Club had to adapt and change with the new demands of public health and the safety of its members. Minor changes to our weekend walk and field trips and delivery of our monthly meetings to a virtual platform were swiftly made. The club is still active in supporting conservation and educational efforts with membership dues funding those efforts. I wrote in the President's Perch a few months back about continued support for nature, sadly an area that deeply needs support but receives little governmental funding. When Covid-19 first grabbed hold of humanity's arm, we turned to nature: parks were overrun, trails were jammed with people escaping home-quarantine, with fishing, birding, hiking getting a surge of interest. Yet, support for parks, monuments, and nature did not see an uptick. I will stipulate that job loss and economic stress has led to such limited funding of this area. The club has seen a marked decrease in membership. Though I humbly feel we still are providing birding avenues for the adventurous; and monthly programs that are not only live-streamed but accessible via YOUTUBE to be watched anytime. The HRBC still is focused on supporting local birding programs and wildlife efforts. We enjoyed a wonderful Fall Big Day, another during the spring, and a monthly photo contest. The club may be acting a little different during the pandemic, but we are moving ahead. I encourage all to renew their membership and their efforts in helping birds, with spring bird counts, Sunday walks, the January bird count, and of course coming to meetings and field trips.

It is a pleasure being the president of the Hampton Roads Bird Club, a role that is only possible with a

strong group of people that are not only dedicated to the club but dedicated to nature. Every member makes my job easy and fun. The board and committee members allow me the appearance of knowing what I am doing. Pete Peterman has done a wonderful job organizing our speakers and programs for our meetings. I always love joining you each month and rush through our general meeting notes to hear from our speakers. Ellis and Wendy Maxey have done a wonderful job maintaining our website that is full of information and which connects us all. Bill Boeh works with focused determination as a compiler and organizer for spring and Christmas bird counts. As well as keeping detailed notes of our meetings and my ramblings. The treasurer, John Adair not only manages our funds but also manages our fun being super active in club activities. Tom who does not get enough credit, always puts together a wonderful newsletter...that I feel is a support system that links the membership. Michael Meyer has worked to organize the novel photo contest and post interesting news on the Facebook page, connecting us all with current avian topics. Rochelle and Harry Colestock took up the mantle of coordinating field trips in a trying time and have done an outstanding job. Unquestionably, board members such as Brian Magill, Barbara Abraham, and Walter Harris have driven the club forward. Gwen Harris welcomes new members though we have had a few this year (so encourage friends to join us one night or an early morning walk in the park), and of course, Jane Frigo who holds the spirit of the club - leading Sunday walks and connecting us together. Plus collecting enough data, Jane ensures I make my undergraduates cry with new statistical activities. I am also indebted to Dave Youker who always has a kind word and a suggestion to improve and engage the membership.

Thinking of the New Year with its cliché of resolutions, what renewed efforts can we make for our feather friends? I did receive a suggestion noting a desire to have a monthly (or bimonthly) bird book club, which is an exciting proposal. With the new year comes renewal and a time of reflection, what can we (HRBC) do to continue the history of the club and celebrate its members? What ideas do you have regarding activities that the HRBC can provide to you and other members? Please join us at our monthly meeting and share your thoughts or send an email.

The next two months will start a new year off with a hopeful positive push forward. I hope you will continue your efforts engaged in FeederWatch, to see you on the trails of Newport News Sunday walks, and greet everyone at our monthly meetings. Please take some time to bask in nature and explore the world. Wanting to safeguard my health and that of my family, I became a hermit. Focused on the new litany of duties with teaching the dissolution of work/home life, with ZOOM making it easy to meet constantly, and with working at home the requests and demands became a 24/7 normality. I gave up too many opportunities to explore, chase, or a simple stroll through nature. A new year gives the chance to realign and adjust. After all, what is a year in the life of a 400-year-old Greenland Shark or an 80,000-year-old stand of aspens? A year is but a flap of the wings of even an old Laysan albatross. Let us march forward leaving the tumble that was 2020 behind. Let us use our new caloric stores from the holidays as energy to learn more bird calls (yes bone-up on your warblers now), observe more bird behavior, and just bird more (even if only from your window).



Le petit Moineau [Sparrow] du Senegal  
Georges-Louis Leclerc,  
Compte de Buffon's Histoire naturelle  
(18th century)

## Winter Wildlife Festival Virginia Beach

Bill Boeh and Dave Youker have called attention to the birding challenge and photo contest opportunities of this January event. The challenge calls for the formation of teams, Big Day (24 hours), Mini Day (3 hours) and Backyard Bird Count covering coastal Virginia (including Peninsula) between January 23-29. The Photo Contest spans all of January. Google search the above title for information.

Hérons, Horned Grebes, Ruddy Ducks, a lone Osprey, and a Bald Eagle.

Close to noon the two groups reunited inside the old fort, where we saw a large flock of American Robins. Other sightings included a Red-winged Blackbird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Juncos and White-throats. Altogether, we saw a combined total of 54 species. Not bad for early November. See complete list below.

HRBC species at Fort Monroe on 11/14/2020:

### Report of Field Trip to Fort Monroe (11/14/2020)

By Harry and Rochelle Colestock

It was a cool, sunny morning when our group of nine gathered at Phoebus Waterfront Park at 8:00 AM to start the birding day. Brown Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Forster's Terns and Laughing Gulls lined the pilings, while Song Sparrows flitted about in the bushes. Lampposts and ship masts provided perching places for Rock Pigeons and Great Black-backed Gulls. House Sparrows were heard nearby. Before heading onto the fort, we split into two smaller groups. A few lucky observers saw "the bird of the day", a Snowy Egret, on the bridge.

First stops at the marina area yielded more cormorants, gulls, Forster's Terns and Buffleheads. One group of birders was surprised when a Sharp-shinned Hawk flew in from the water. Birds seen on buildings and in bushes were American Goldfinches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and European Starlings. For such a beautiful day, there wasn't much more to see on the water except for Common and Red-throated Loons, Ring-billed Gulls and Royal Terns. As we moved past the old fort, we got good looks at Dark-eyed Juncos and White-throated Sparrows foraging in a grassy area. A few Savannah Sparrows were also seen. We all spotted huge flocks consisting of approximately Brown-headed Cowbirds, Starlings and Common Grackles. Killdeer were seen in a parking lot. Mourning Doves were in abundance in the fields, as were Eastern Meadowlarks. A few Tree Swallows flew overhead. Silent Northern Mockingbirds watched us from trees. Views across the water from the campground revealed Great Blue

Bufflehead	Blue Jay
Ruddy Duck	American Crow
Horned Grebe	Carolina Chickadee
Rock Pigeon	Tree Swallow
Mourning Dove	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Killdeer	Red-Breasted Nuthatch
Sanderling	White-breasted Nuthatch
Greater Yellowlegs	Carolina Wren
Laughing Gull	European Starling
Ring-billed Gull	Brown Thrasher
Herring Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Great Black-backed Gull	Eastern Bluebird
Forster's Tern	American Robin
Royal Tern	House Sparrow
Common Loon	House Finch
Double-crested Cormorant	American Goldfinch
Brown Pelican	Chipping Sparrow
Great Blue Heron	Dark-eyed Junco
Snowy Egret	White-throated Sparrow
Turkey Vulture	Savannah Sparrow
Osprey	Song Sparrow
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Eastern Meadowlark
Bald Eagle	Red-winged Blackbird
Belted Kingfisher	Brown-headed Cowbird
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Common Grackle
Downy Woodpecker	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Flicker	Northern Cardinal

### HRBC Photo Contest November-December 2020

Congratulations to our November photo winners Bill Boeh and Shawn Dash. For December the 1<sup>st</sup> place was taken by Bryan Barmore and Pete Peterman took 2<sup>nd</sup>. Want to enter the January or February contests? Please do. Shawn's entry rules (same as last time) can be found at the end of this article. The gallery <https://facebook.com/hamptonroadsbirdclub> on Facebook has all the photos submitted to the contest for each month since it started in September.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
**Bill Boeh** 1<sup>st</sup> Place November

Here's a written interview with Bill:

Please call out the species and state why you picked such.

“Species is a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. I chose this species because Anne & I thoroughly enjoy them. We’ve hung a feeder in the yard and have planted several nectar-producing plants specifically to provide them with food. I believe at least one pair nests in our neighbor’s yard, and they are frequent visitors to our feeder and nectar plants.”

Where and when was the picture taken? Was it a planned ambush? Last hummer seen this season?

“The picture was taken from my kitchen window on Tuesday, October 13, 2020. It was not planned; took the picture spontaneously since the bird was so close and “posing” so nicely. We’ve been trying to “naturalize” our property over the last 10 years or so, planting many native plants and some non-native pollinator feeder plants. The plant on which the bird is perched is a Mexican Sage, a native of the southern U.S. It flowers prolifically in late summer to early fall, providing nectar for the hummers as they “bulk up” for migration. This is a new addition to our yard. It’s potted, and we placed it on a small concrete patio that is right outside our kitchen window. This is the first year that the plant has flowered. It was great to watch the hummers (as well as pollinating insects and butterflies) frequently visiting the plant throughout September and into October. Since it’s been a warm fall, bees have continued to visit the plant as recently as last week (when the weather turned colder).”

What equipment was used?

“A Canon SX50 HS.”

What's your favorite birding spot in Hampton Roads? Same place as for pictures?

“I have to say my favorite is Newport News Park, as I do most of my birding on the HRBC’s Sunday walks.”

What is the role of photography in your birding?

“Primarily for the pleasure of capturing these beautiful creatures digitally; secondarily I use the images to help identify a particular bird.”

Do you have advice for other birders and/or bird photographers?

“No, except if birding and/or photography are your hobbies, get out and do them frequently!”

Do you have another contest or bird photography topic to write about instead?

“No, but I hope to submit more photos for this contest.”



Sanderling  
**Shawn Dash** 2<sup>nd</sup> Place November

From Shawn:

“The photo was taken at Kiptopeke State Park in early October. A group of 12 or so Sanderlings mixed with two Willets was working the beach on a cool cloudy day. The Sanderlings did their typical behavior running up and down from the water's edge. Though this little guy dipped deep in the waves for what I can assume is a tasty invertebrate meal.”



Red-breasted Nuthatch  
**Bryan Barmore** 1st Place December

From Bryan:

“My wife Sharon Burton and I celebrated my birthday this year with a trip to a pre-civil-war cabin in Franklin County. The owners had several feeders around which we saw a lot of purple finches and pine siskins; they could be added to the HRBC Virginia Big Day count of November 7 which was run by Dave Youker. We observed 23 species at the cabin over the weekend. I enjoy bird photography but find it often loses out to simply watching all of the bird action around.”



Great Horned Owl  
**Pete Peterman** 2nd Place December

From Pete:

“This Great Horned Owl was in the Loblolly Pine Tree in the Arboretum of Newport News Park that over the years, if a Great Horned Owl is present, he/she will be in that tree. During the 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month bird walks led by Jane Frigo, we check that tree. I discovered that the owl was present as I saw barring from the owl's chest close to a tree limb and when I moved to the right, the owl came into view as is shown in the photo.”

Shawn’s guidelines for the HRBC photo contest:

There will be one contest each month (2 winners each month for a total of 4 photos for the newsletter).

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 name (i.e., ShawnDash\_Osprey).
3. Submit to Michael Meyer ([michael.meyer@cnu.edu](mailto:michael.meyer@cnu.edu)).
4. Photos must be delivered to Michael by the start of the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.
5. Photos will be compiled and upload as a PDF file and sent to members.
6. The photos will also be uploaded to Facebook <https://facebook.com/hamptonroadsbirdclub> as an album called “HRBC December Photo Contest,” etc.
7. Members can vote for their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> favorite, via an online form sent to members by email. All members can simply Click your favorite photo.
8. Votes will be tallied on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month and the winners contacted for a short write-up to accompany their photo in the newsletter.

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TO JOIN OR RENEW. If you would like to join the Hampton Roads Bird Club or renew you 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](mailto: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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