



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 48 No. 8

[www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org)

October 2024



### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Nancy Barnhart

October greetings! October means migration and our opportunity to see many birds we typically don't see in large numbers. For me it means my favorites, the shorebirds and the raptors, are moving through, in the tens, the hundreds, even the thousands. Both groups can bring on sighs and groans as they can be a bit tricky to identify. That's the beauty of migration; enough of these birds pass through places we can see them to give us the experience to learn them.

If you haven't been to the Hawkwatch sponsored by Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) at Kiptopeke State Park in Cape Charles, I highly recommend a visit. Take a chair, take your lunch, and bank in for several hours, even all day. It's the best place I know to get some good experience seeing and identifying raptors overhead. We get many days when birds are very accommodating and fly low right over the platform. You can see enough Merlins and American Kestrels, for instance, to be able to tease out the differences by the end of the day. The CVWO staff will help by calling out what they see and giving you a couple of pointers about the differences.

Of course, some days—the "bright blue-sky days"—can be tricky. When raptors decide to fly at great heights it can be a demanding day. Fortunately for us, the young staff have to do the heavy lifting of counting those high-flyers and we can sit back and see how many, if any, we can figure out. Best to bring sunglasses on those days!

In addition to raptors, there are often surprises at the Hawkwatch. This year they have had a Wood Stork, a Sandhill Crane, a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, and many passerines in addition to some fun kites, both Mississippi and Swallow-tailed. On August 30 this year our counters established a new U.S. high eBird count for Eastern Kingbirds, tallying 13,824 in one (Continued on Page 2)

### UPCOMING PROGRAMS

By Patty Maloney

**October 23, 6:30 p.m. (In-person and via Zoom):** Rexanne Bruno, "Birding the Ecuadorian Andes, March 2024."

Join us on Wednesday, October 23 at 6:30 p.m. at the Quarterpath Recreation Center, Meeting Room 2, 202 Quarterpath Road, Williamsburg or via Zoom. Our presenter will be Rexanne Bruno on "Birding the Ecuadorian Andes, March 2024." Rexanne has been doing a lot of traveling to see birds lately. Her most recent trip was to Ecuador in March 2024. She went looking for South American birds, but saw many birds that are familiar to us here in Virginia. So, I hope you enjoy her photos of Rock Pigeon, Broad-winged Hawk, American Kestrel, Peregrine Falcon, House Wren, Swainson's Thrush, Blackburnian Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Canada Warbler, Summer Tanager, and Scarlet Tanager. Just kidding! Rexanne has lots of photos of birds of Ecuador to share with us.

**Save the date:** November 20, 6:30 p.m., James Abbott will present his graduate research project and birding in Belize. 🐦



Rexanne Bruno shown waiting for dinner with the rest of her tour group at the San Isidro Lodge in Ecuador, which you'll hear more about at our October meeting.

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*Buff-breasted Sandpiper* photographed by Nancy Barnhart a couple of miles from the Hawkwatch at Kiptopeke. Nancy says: "This is my favorite species and REALLY can be hard to find in a potato field!"

**PRESIDENT'S CORNER, Continued from Page 1**

day. (The previous one-day high count in the U.S. was 7,500.) Interestingly, one of the two world-renowned hawkwatch sites in Veracruz, Mexico, reported 7,534 Eastern Kingbirds five days later. They were on the move!

Our October field trip (see details later in this newsletter) will be to the Eastern Shore and include a stop at Hawkwatch. I hope you will consider taking advantage of this fun event. We might even get lucky and encounter some of those pesky shorebirds, too! In the meantime, I look forward to seeing you out and about as we take in the magic of migration!

Happy Birding! 🐦

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**WBC MEMBERSHIP**

Please welcome new members Cynthia Schulz, Richard "Dick" Johnson, Willis H. Fout, Samantha Denney, Tristan Ramage, and Kenneth Douglas!

The purpose of the Williamsburg Bird Club is to promote interest in the study of wild birds, protect birds and their habitats, and share the joy of birding with others. If you, too, would like to join our club, you can do so online at <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/join/> by either using PayPal to pay the annual club dues or printing a membership form from that page which you can then mail in with a check. 🐦

## BIRD WALKS: NEXT WALK ON OCTOBER 26

By Scott Hemler

We had 17 people come out for our September 28 bird walk at New Quarter Park. The rain from the previous day's storm was gone and it was a sunny and beautiful morning! We saw 23 bird species (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S196784535>), including several American Redstarts and a Black and White Warbler probably stopping by the park for a meal and some rest during their trip south. We saw seven Great Egrets down along Queens Creek. We also heard five Clapper Rails calling down at the creek, though none of the rails came out of the grass that we could see. We did not see any winter resident birds yet. Probably a little early for them.

Our next "4<sup>th</sup> Saturday" bird walk at New Quarter Park will be held on October 26. Meet the group in the parking lot by the park office at 8:00 a.m. 🐦



*It was great to see the large crowd and so many new folks turn out for our monthly bird walk on September 28 at New Quarter Park! Photo by Scott Hemler.*

## FIELD TRIP REPORT

Next trip is to the Eastern Shore on Oct. 19

By George Martin

### Saturday, September 21 – Jamestown Beach Event Park

Laughing Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants ruled the day at Jamestown Beach Event Park on Saturday, September 21, per scope views of the Jamestown ferry terminal. The eleven participants also discovered a wide variety of land birds, highlighted by individual Scarlet Tanager, Blue Grosbeak, and Indigo Bunting. Thanks to Babs Giffin for chronicling the 43 species on eBird (<https://ebird.org/checklist/S196255367>).



*Birding Jamestown Beach Event Park during the field trip on September 21. Photo by Patty Maloney.*

### Saturday, October 19 – Eastern Shore

Next up on our trip list is the Eastern Shore on Saturday, October 19. Deborah Humphries will lead our group that day, with several stops and usually a great variety of birds. We can expect to identify more than 50 species on this field trip, and if the conditions are right, many more than 50 species! Expected stops are:

- The overlook at the north side of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel (CBBT)
- Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge (ESVANWR)
- Kiptopeke State Park, both the Hawkwatch site and a trail

We'll gather at the overlook, our first stop, around 8:30 a.m. That's usually a pretty quick stop, depending on how many gulls and cormorants we have to count. But we should be at the ESVANWR Visitor Center by 9:00 a.m. or a little after. Times after that depend on how good the birding is. And, if a rarity has been reported on the southern Eastern Shore, we may add a stop to look for that bird. All that birding will make a lot of us hungry, so lunch at Cape Charles Brewing Company should be the final stop. Lunchers can expect to return to Williamsburg in the range of 3:30 – 4:00 p.m.

Those interested in carpooling should let me know they'd like to carpool and meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center shortly after 7:00 a.m. Departure from there is at 7:15 a.m. If you are willing to drive a carpool, please let me know that as well. My email is [grm0803@gmail.com](mailto:grm0803@gmail.com). Also let me know if you want to stay for lunch!

If you have a State Park Annual Pass, please bring that with you. Without a pass, the entry fee for Kiptopeke is \$7 per vehicle. Drivers should remember to bring their EZ Pass transponder for the CBBT tolls.

### Saturday, November 16 – Grandview Nature Preserve

Mark your calendars for the November field trip, Grandview Nature Preserve in Hampton. I expect we'll meet at the entrance to the Preserve at 8:00 a.m. that day. More details to follow! 🐦

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## THE BIRDS OF MEXICO VIA VIDEOGRAPHY

Summarized by Cathy Millar

Joe Piotrowski, MD, is a longtime WBC member and former programs vice-president, as well as a highly regarded Riverside vascular surgeon. He added a new dimension to our September 18 program meeting by formatting his presentation as a quiz. As pens and paper were handed out, we were reassured that our scores would be kept confidential.

For the first time ever, Joe had set himself the challenge of documenting the Mexican birds he saw by capturing them on video rather than in still images. He used a 100–400 mm lens and a mirrorless Canon EOS R5 camera featuring eye-detection automatic focus that makes tracking animals and birds easier. (Continued on Page 5)

## BIRDS OF MEXICO, Cont. from Page 4

This was a cultural tour, during which the caravan was met on their travels by local guides and vans to take them to pyramids and many other exciting treasures of Mexico. Alas, there was no focus on birds, so Joe was on his own to find birds and video them. Some were familiar birds that we see on our Virginia

coastline, which boosted our scores in his quiz. His videotapes captured a lot of charming avian behavior and interactions that are a lot more difficult to convey via still photographs.

Here is a YouTube link to the presentation for your enjoyment: <https://youtu.be/OuMrNseVZys>. See how many of the birds you can identify correctly! 🐦

## HOSPITALITY CORNER

Cathy Flanagan, Refreshments Chairperson

Our Summer Social at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park happened to fall on probably the hottest day of the year. How hot was it? 102° F, according to AccuWeather for the Chickahominy District. It was so hot that the purple, yogurt-coated pretzels (in honor of the purple martins) on the refreshments table stuck together and melted. The watermelon was warm, but still welcome. So, this Hospitality “chair” had the idea to stress everyone’s overheated brain with a game of *Bird Jeopardy* that she created while at home in the air conditioning.

The procedure was often confusing, as it was played by dividing the group into two named teams: The Cardinals and The Buntings. Anyone could be a contestant by raising their hand. There were no buzzers. There were Daily Doubles, and harder questions for more points, but it was challenging to keep score. The Categories were “Birds that are Red,” “Birds that are Blue,” “Purple Martins,” “In the Newsletter,” and “Take a Chance.”

Hospitality thinks that the game has potential—maybe better on the big screen at the rec center? Does anyone want to help create questions for a

Holiday version? Thanks, Jeanette for managing to keep up with the scoring!

P.S. The Buntings won. 🐦



The Bird Jeopardy board and categories developed by Cathy Flanagan for play during the Summer Social held in June.

## JOIN A CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT!

Do you have an interest in assisting scientists to better understand the birds that reside in or pass through our area on migration with the ultimate aim of conserving bird life? The Cornell Lab of Ornithology provides two opportunities in the next several weeks to participate in citizen science projects dedicated to this purpose. One of the two Global Big Days the Cornell Lab holds each year is scheduled for **October 12**. Wherever you are on **October Big Day 2024**, take a few minutes to observe the birds you see and record them in eBird.

You’ll be part of the global community of birders which last year submitted 83,735 eBird checklists from over 36,000 people in 191 countries!

More information about how to participate in October Big Day 2024 can be found here: <https://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-12-oct-2024>.

(Continued on Page 6)

## CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECTS, Cont. from Page 5

The Cornell Lab's **Project Feederwatch** begins **November 1 and runs through April 30**. This citizen science project has been running for over three decades in collaboration with Birds Canada and is designed to monitor changes from habitat, disease, and climate in the winter distributions and abundance of bird species across North America. Most

participants count and record the number of individuals of each bird species they see at their backyard feeders several times throughout the winter; but, according to the Cornell Lab, you don't need to have a feeder and can monitor birds in all types of locales, even if it's only once all winter. More information about Project Feederwatch and how to participate can be found here: <https://feederwatch.org/about/project-overview/>. 🐦

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## 2025 NATURE CAMP APPLICATIONS DUE BY OCTOBER 31

By Judy Jones and Lee Schuster



loving students to learn about our Virginia environment and strategies for its protection. This fall, during the month of October, we are accepting applications for scholarships for the Summer 2025 sessions. These scholarships, valued at \$1000 each, offer unique and exciting environmental opportunities for students in James City County, upper York County, and Williamsburg.

[Nature Camp](#) is a two-week, co-educational, academic camp that emphasizes education in natural history and environmental studies. It is intended for those seeking a science/nature experience. Campers will attend class daily, maintain a notebook, complete written projects, and participate in outdoor activities.

If you know of a student, presently in grades 5-12, who loves nature and would enjoy a two-week session at Nature Camp, please encourage them to go to our website, download the application, and get it in the mail before October 31. The application goes live on line on October 1 and can be found at <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/about/nature-camp-scholarships/>.

Three middle and high school students attended Nature Camp during the 2024 summer sessions on scholarships provided by the Williamsburg Bird Club. Abigail Hale (presently in 8<sup>th</sup> grade) and Estelle Miller (presently in 9<sup>th</sup> grade) were awarded Bill Williams Nature Scholarships, and Delaney Ranz (currently a senior) received the Millin Nature Camp Scholarship. Abigail, Estelle, and Delaney provided our club with

Nature Camp, located in Vesuvius, VA in the George Washington National Forest has, for many, many years, offered opportunities for nature-

the descriptions of their experiences at camp that follow.

### ABIGAIL HALE

Nature Camp was a wonderful experience. I made so many friends and memories I will never forget. There were so many beautiful hikes like Buttermilk, which had a small stream with white rocks and a small waterfall. There was also Peaton Rock, a large bedrock outcrop overlooking the forest around the camp. We also went on Sunday hikes. I went on the limnology hike where we were supposed to follow Big Merry stream back to camp but we got lost and had to find the gravel path back to camp.

I had two classes each day. We had two major classes one day and two different minor classes the next day. I majored in limnology, the study of freshwater ecosystems. My minor classes were nature writing (my favorite minor class), geography, geology, Appalachian ecology, botany, entomology, herpetology, mycology, nature drawing, and ornithology. I learned so much and the teachers were so nice!

In between classes we had rec time where we got to play games, went on hikes, or read. I liked reading by the pool or playing "Kitty wants a corner," which is a game where we get in a circle and there is one person in the center who will ask if they can have a corner and you have to send them to another person while switching places with other people. If the person in the center gets your spot while you're running then you're the new kitty. I had so much fun at Nature Camp and learned so much! I am so thankful to the Williamsburg Bird Club for providing the scholarship for me to attend. I really hope to get the opportunity to go again next summer!

(Continued on Page 7)

## NATURE CAMP, Cont. from Page 6

### ESTELLE MILLER

I really enjoyed Nature Camp with all the fun activities they had in store for us. For my major class I got herpetology, which I was very excited about. In herpetology we learned what a bio-blitz is, which is a way for a herpetologist to keep track of a population of species in one place. My minors were Appalachian ecology, botany, entomology, geography, geology, limnology, mycology, nature drawing, nature writing, and ornithology. My favorite minor was limnology because we caught some cool looking fish. On July 4th we had groups for rounds of competitions. I was on the orange team because they are the best team! We went on a trash hike, the mile run, the sponge race, and a relay race. Then on Sunday we did hikes. I went on the Big Mary backwards hike which means we hiked up stream in the Big Mary Creek. It was very slippery and a few times we climbed up giant rocks. We went from the meadow to table rock. It was a good experience with plenty of animals. All the counselors were very nice and always made things more fun and funny. It was a great all-round experience and it made me want to learn more about the environment and what happens in the world outside. In conclusion it was a very fun two weeks in the woods with all my friends that I made. I am grateful for the scholarship because it gave me the chance to have a great experience in the woods.

### DELANEY RANTZ

Thanks to the Millin Family and Williamsburg Bird Club, I received a scholarship to attend Nature Camp

this summer in Vesuvius, Virginia. I loved being at Nature Camp. It was like a home away from home.

There were different subjects we could major in, and I chose mycology, knowing mushrooms are so important to the ecosystem. One of the things I love most about Nature Camp is that it involves experiential learning. I personally feel that that is the best type of learning. Our group walked in the woods almost daily looking for different varieties of mushrooms. It hadn't rained in a while so it was pretty dry and consequently we didn't spot many mushrooms. However, we had so many interesting conversations and so much fun as we walked through the woods. So I guess you could say the journey was the best part.

Nature camp staff and counselors were all so supportive and nice. I also got to reconnect with friends I made previously at camp. They are kind, fun, caring, and accepting. All of this helped create a great learning environment.

Then there was the food! The food at camp was so good. It was always fresh and made from scratch. One of my favorite foods was called "boat meal", which was a dried oatmeal mixture for breakfast.

Since I'm a senior now in high school, summer 2024 was likely my last time as a camper. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. I really appreciate it, and who knows—maybe someday I'll get to come back as a camp counselor so I can give back to a place that has had such a positive impact on me. 🐦

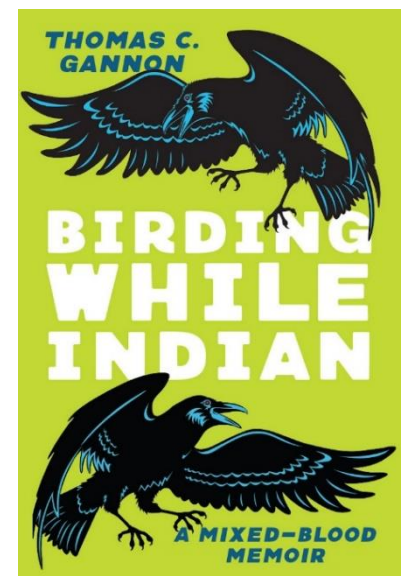
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## NEW BOOKS AT WRL

By Catherine Flanagan, Library Liaison

The Williamsburg Regional Library purchased the following new books for its collection this year using funds donated by the WBC:

- *Baby Bird Identification*, by Linda Tuttle-Adams
- *The Big Year That Flew By*, by Arjan Dwarshuis
- *Birding to Change the World*, by Trish O'Kane
- *Birding While Indian*, by Thomas C. Gannon
- *The Birds That Audubon Missed*, by Kenn Kaufman
- *The Feminist Bird Club's Birding for a Better World*, by Molly Adams
- *A Field Guide to Backyard Birds of North America*, by Rob Hume
- *Find More Birds*, by Heather Wolf
- *How to Look at a Bird*, by Clare Walker Leslie
- *The Last Cold Place*, by Naira De Gracia
- *The Life of Birds*, by David Attenborough (Continued on Page 8)



## LIBRARY BOOKS, Cont. from Page 7

- *Reader's Digest Book of North American Birds*, by Norman M. Barrett
- *The Screech Owl Companion*, by Jim Wright
- *Yellowstone's Birds*, by Douglas W. Smith

WBC members might also be interested to know that two *New York Times* Bestsellers—*What an Owl Knows* (2023) by Jennifer Ackerman and *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* (2024) by Amy Tan—also recently have been added to the WRL's holdings and are available in hardcover, e-book, and audiobook formats. 🐦

## RECENT SIGHTINGS

After reading about a cream-colored Eastern Bluebird in the September issue of *The Flyer*, **Liz George** shared that she had seen a leucistic **House Finch** at her feeder earlier this summer at her home in the Cromwell Ridge neighborhood off of Monticello Ave. On September 8, Liz managed to get a photo (below) of the unusual bird.



**Carol Annis** was very excited to see a **Philadelphia Vireo** (photo below) on September 21 at her neighborhood pond in Toano.



**Keith Kennedy's** backyard **Brown Thrasher** has discovered it loves peanuts. Keith says the bird's whole family has picked up the habit.



**Cindy Sherwood** spied and photographed a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** (below) on September 22 on the W&M campus. eBird records indicate that the bird was among the earliest of its species—a winter resident in our area—to arrive in Hampton Roads this fall.



(See more Recent Sightings on the next page)



**Barbara Houston** “captured” an immature **Yellow-crowned Night Heron** (photo below) at Fort Monroe at the end of August before they all migrated south.



Just after sunrise on September 11, while stopped at a traffic light in downtown Norfolk, **Laura Mae** saw a **Clapper Rail** (photo on right) fly from a tall office tower across the street to a shorter building on the Elizabeth River. Laura and others have been recording bird deaths in Norfolk from window strikes and night lights (see <https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/dead-birds->

[in-norfolk](https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/dead-birds-in-norfolk)). Laura notes that this Clapper Rail was the first and only one she has seen alive in downtown Norfolk. Conversely, Clapper Rail is the second most common dead bird (9 out of 133 total observations to date) found in her monitoring.



**Marc Thibault's** photo (below) of a **Great Blue Heron** at Jamestown Beach Event Park serves as a reminder to us all not to forget the big picture (pun unavoidable).





**Williamsburg Bird Club**  
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## **ANNUAL DONATIONS FROM OUR LOCALLY-OWNED BIRD STORES**

The Williamsburg Bird Club wishes to express our gratitude to our locally-owned Bird Stores, Wild Birds Unlimited and Backyard Birder Seed & Supply, for their generous donations each year to the Club. Their contributions help sustain WBC's annual commitment to provide funds for the Ornithology Research Grants given annually to graduate students at the College of William and Mary as well as support other Club projects and activities.

### **PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR LOCALLY-OWNED BIRD STORES & FELLOW WBC MEMBERS**

Backyard Birder



**Backyard Birder Seed & Supply** (located in Williamsburg at the Quarterpath Shopping Center near the Kingsmill Harris Teeter) supports the WBC through donations and a 5% discount on purchases for WBC members. For your discount in-store, please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout.

<https://www.backyardbirder.org/>



**Wild Birds Unlimited** (located in Williamsburg at Settler's Market in New Town) supports the WBC by donating to the club an amount equal to 5% of the pre-tax amount spent in the store by WBC members each year. Please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout. <https://williamsburg.wbu.com/>