



# The Flyer

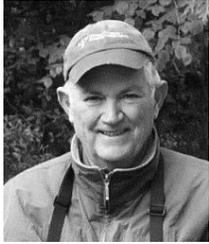
## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 40, No. 1

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

January 2016

### President's Corner



By Geoff Giles

Out with the old year, in with the new! As surely as the birds of the past summer have flown, the last year has also faded into seasons past. It's hard to imagine just now the hard snowfalls and prolonged

freezes we had last February, especially when we have balmy days this December fresh in our minds. And how about all this rain and cloudy weather? Could a wintering duck population ask for more? We'll soon find out, as our upcoming January field trip will be to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area. On a good year, when winter rains have filled the impoundments, and this surely is a good year, the close-up views there of beautiful ducks for viewing and photography are beyond compare. Stunning Wood Ducks, Northern Shovelers, Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwalls, American Wigeons – oh my!! Don't miss this one.

First we had to get the new birding year off to a good start. Shirley Devan made sure that we do this by leading our traditional Survivor's Bird Walk on New Year's Day on the Greensprings boardwalk trail. All who have survived the late hours and other ravages of celebrating the end of the old year the night before were welcomed to join us. And as Shirley pointed out, for those of us who keep a year list of our Virginia birds, every bird seen on 1 January will be a year bird. This beautiful and varied avian habitat is always good for a pleasant surprise or two, and on that morning it was a place and time to share with birding friends, old and new. Hope you're a survivor!

Speaking of which, a number of us have survived pelagic birding trips offshore in December out of Virginia Beach on the "Stormy Petrel II" in fine fashion, with some memorable encounters with seabirds and other wildlife, including humpback whales and loggerhead turtles. As the species of

*Continued on Page 4.*

### January 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Please join us for our next meeting on Wednesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> in the Integrated Science Center, Room 1127, at the College of William & Mary (behind Phi Beta Kappa Hall). Note that we are now meeting earlier, at **7:00** rather than 7:30. The Integrated Science building is past Andrews Hall, to the right of Millington. The presentations that evening will be by Matt Anthony and Nick Newberry. Matt is a W&M American Studies doctoral student who spent his summer at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, MD working with the Breeding Bird Survey. W&M undergraduate Nick Newberry will share his experiences from his summer spent studying flycatchers in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Join us to hear about these interesting research projects. Please remember to have a parking pass on your dashboard. If you need a new one, it can be downloaded on our website at [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org).

### February 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting

Our February speaker will be Brian Watts, who will present his program focusing on shorebird hunting and offshore wind development and the importance of understanding mortality limits for these issues.

Looking ahead, March's speaker will be Ashley Peele, PhD., talking about our new initiative, The Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. In April, our William & Mary Grad Students will share their research, and we'll end the season in May with Bob Schamerhorn, who will review warbler identification with photos and song.

## TAKE NOTE!

### New Meeting Time and Place

Our next meeting will be January 20<sup>th</sup> at **7:00** p.m. in a new room in a new building, the Integrated Science Center, Room 1127, at the College of William and Mary (behind Phi Beta Kappa Hall). Note that we are now meeting earlier, at **7:00** rather than 7:30. The Integrated Science building is past Andrews Hall, to the right of Millington.

**Please check the website if you need a parking pass or a map of the campus.**

## 2016 Officers

**President** 645-8716  
Geoff Giles [tylerandal2@aol.com](mailto:tylerandal2@aol.com)

**Vice-President (Programs)** 206-1046  
Cheryl Jacobson [jcheryljoy@aol.com](mailto:jcheryljoy@aol.com)

**Co-Vice-Presidents (The Flyer)**  
Shirley Devan 813-1322  
[sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net)  
Judy Jones 293-8297  
[jjones184@cox.net](mailto:jjones184@cox.net)

**Treasurer** 221-6683  
Ann Carpenter [carpent66@cox.net](mailto:carpent66@cox.net)

**Secretary** 229-1775  
Cathy Millar [millar.cathy@gmail.com](mailto:millar.cathy@gmail.com)

**Member-at-Large** 707-3345  
Jeanette Navia [jnavia@gmail.com](mailto:jnavia@gmail.com)

**Member-at-Large** 634-4164  
Jan Lockwood [nzedr@msn.com](mailto:nzedr@msn.com)

**Past President** 813-1322  
Shirley Devan [sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net)

## Committee Chairpersons

**Field Trips** 565-0536  
Jim Corliss [jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net)

**Records & Bird Counts** 229-1124  
Bill Williams [billwilliams154@gmail.com](mailto:billwilliams154@gmail.com)

**Library Liaison** 565-6148  
Lee Schuster [dllschuster@cox.net](mailto:dllschuster@cox.net)

**Refreshments**  
Jan Lockwood [nzedr@msn.com](mailto:nzedr@msn.com)  
Ruth Gordon [ruthkagordon@gmail.com](mailto:ruthkagordon@gmail.com)

**Membership/Webmistress** 707-3345  
Jeanette Navia [jnavia@gmail.com](mailto:jnavia@gmail.com)

**Historian** 229-2830  
Tom McCary

## Wild Birds Unlimited and Backyard Birder support Bird Club and birders

Visit the new Wild Birds Unlimited Store in Settler's Market. The Club receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount our Club members spend at WBU. Remember to let them know you are a member. At the new Backyard Birder store at Quarterpath Commons, present your Bird Club Parking Pass and receive a 10% discount on most merchandise.

## Reported Bird Sightings for November 2015

*We want to know what you're seeing in your yard and travels. Please share with Club members by sending your sightings to Judy Jones [jjones184@cox.net](mailto:jjones184@cox.net) or Shirley Devan [sedevan52@cox.net](mailto:sedevan52@cox.net).*

**November 23:** Jeanette Navia has been able to get this photo of her leucistic American Goldfinch, which was tough as he (she?) only seems to appear in dark, rainy conditions. She contacted Bill Williams because she wasn't sure if it was leucistic or had lost its feathers and was growing new ones back.



According to Project Feederwatch, "occasionally a bird will lose feathers in a close call with a predator. When this happens, the new feathers sometimes grow in white and then change back to the normal color at the next regular molt. This kind of white coloring looks like leucism but is not." Thanks, Jeanette, for a fascinating insight into our birding world.

**December 15:** Down in St. Augustine, Lois Leeth sighted 14 Coots, 18 Snowy Egrets in nearby trees, 4 Wood Storks, many adult ibis, 2 of them immature, 10 Mallards, dozens of Mourning Doves on telephone lines, one adult Brant, one Cooper's Hawk, dozens of Ring-billed Gulls, 4 Anhingas, 15 Double-crested Cormorants, and dozens of Purple Martins flying over, landing on nearby telephone lines.

**December 19:** Here's Shirley Devan's "Best Bird of Our Trip" photo--these flamingos in the salt ponds on the coast of Sardinia, seen from the bus as they traveled from Cagliari to Nora. This was not a life bird for her but she had never seen them in the wild, only in captivity.



**December 20:** Shaune and Steve Reams saw about two dozen Double-crested Cormorants land on Queens Lake. There were also several gulls, Great Blue Herons, and 3 beautiful Bald Eagles. One of the eagles landed on their oak tree and remained there for about five minutes. They've had few birds this fall and winter, possibly because Cooper's Hawk took up residence in their backyard.

**December 26 & 27:** Shirley Devan had a Hermit Thrush plus a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Golden-crowned Kinglet at her feeder.

**January 1:** Bill Williams proudly reported a Western Tanager sighted at his home. He said that this was "continuing; a male present since 2 Nov 2015; 2016 marks the eighth consecutive calendar year a male Western Tanager has come to our feeder in winter."

## January 16<sup>th</sup> Field Trip to Dutch Gap

On Saturday, January 16, we will travel to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chesterfield. Dutch Gap is one of our favorite spots for watching wintering waterfowl from viewing platforms bordering the fresh water impoundments. In previous years we've enjoyed up-close views of Wood Ducks, Ring-necked Ducks, American Widgeon, Northern Shovelers, Gadwalls and more. We'll also plan a short walk on an easily accessible trail through mixed woodlands along marshes of the James River in hopes of Wilson's Snipe and songbirds. Previous trips have also yielded a variety of raptors including American Kestrels, Red-shouldered Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, and Bald Eagles. Spotting scopes are a real bonus on this trip, and the waterfowl also offer terrific photo opportunities.

For those wishing to carpool, we will depart Colony Square Shopping Center (near the intersection of Rt. 199 and Jamestown Road) at 7:30 AM, rain or shine. We plan to start birding at Dutch Gap at approximately 9:00 AM. If you wish to drive on your own, the waterfowl viewing platforms are located along Coxendale Road - we will find you there. This trip has no space limitations and there is no need to sign up. Just come join us for what should be a great morning of birding. We hope to see you there!

## February 20<sup>th</sup> Field Trip to CBBT by Car

The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Authority has reserved Saturday, February 20 for us to conduct our annual field trip to the bridge tunnel islands. This trip has been a big hit the last two years and we're hoping for another good outing this year! The birding will begin at 9:00 AM at the CBBT toll booth plaza parking lot and we'll plan for three hours on the islands. We'll carpool from the Colony Square parking lot at roughly 7:30 AM and meet up with any separate drivers at the CBBT where we'll condense into as few cars as practical.

As in past years, the CBBT security policies require us to provide a list of participants no later than 10 days in advance of the trip. The cost is \$10 per person (\$150 per 15-person group) to pay for the security personnel who will escort us to the three islands not open to the public.

So, if you would like to participate please take the following steps:

1. Contact Jim at [jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net) so he can start a head count and let the CBBT security office know how large our group could be. If you didn't get the email with the participation form, contact Jim and he'll send you a new one.
2. You must get the participation form back to Jim—either email it, bring it to the January club meeting, or mail it to Jim by Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>: Jim Corliss, 136 Wellington Circle, Williamsburg VA 23185
3. Bring your \$10 to the January meeting, mail it to Jim, or PayPal it to "[jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net)". Advance payment is highly desired because the fee is on a group basis, so if you don't show and haven't paid, then the rest of us would need to cover your portion.

Jim would like to send the CBBT security office all of our forms by February 1st. Please contact him if you have any questions about the trip. Additional details about logistics will be forthcoming as the trip nears. Also look for information soon about our 'CBBT by Boat Trip', which is tentatively scheduled for February 7.

## A Member's Photo

*A Brown-headed Nuthatch*  
Photo by Inge Curtis



## President's Corner (continued)

seabirds changes with the weather and progression of the winter, the chances for alcids increase. Someday my puffin will come! So I, for one, will give it another go in January and brave the elements for another day of birding offshore. If you are slightly less adventurous, but are still inclined to get out on the Bay to enjoy the bay ducks and sea ducks (Long-tailed Ducks, three scoter species, scaups, Buffleheads, harlequins, mergansers, gannets, grebes, loons and more!), plus dolphins, seals and whales you might want to join us on our boat trip on 7 February. Details on how to sign up will be going out to our members soon, so make sure your membership is up to date and join us!

And if terra firma is your preferred venue for encounters with the bay ducks, sea ducks and aquatic critters, Jim Corliss has the solution. He is scheduling our February field trip to the “forbidden” islands of the CBBT by car. These prime viewing locations in mid-Bay are not accessible to the birding public normally, but Jim will make it happen for our members on that day. That is always a super trip, followed by more birding at some prime spots on the Eastern Shore once we have birded the CBBT. Spaces are limited, so jump on that one once it is open for sign-ups. It will be a highlight of our winter birding!

Please note that there will be some changes to our meetings next year, although happily we will still be able to have them on the William and Mary campus on the third Wednesdays monthly. Change one – we will start meetings at 7 pm, so that we can end earlier. Change two – we will meet in a room we have not had previously, that is near our previous meeting room. Exact location is detailed in this newsletter, so please take note of both time and place for our 20 January meeting!!

And speaking of meetings, Cheryl Jacobson has lined up some great programs for the next meetings. In January we will have presentations by two of our youngest and brightest star birders, Nick Newberry and Matt Anthony, on their recent ornithological work. February will feature Brian Watts, head of the Center for Conservation Biology, speaking to us about mortality in some of our favorite bird species, including Peregrine Falcons and Ospreys. In March we will have a presentation on the upcoming launch of the Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas project. We hope that our club can participate and make a significant contribution to that exciting project, and that meeting will be the official kickoff for our club!

We hope you are being kind to your neighborhood birds, although they may be wondering as we are when winter is going to get here. Hope you are counting them for Project Feeder Watch. Still no Snowy Owls yet at my house this year, but I sure have a lot on Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice! I have noticed that there are Eastern Bluebirds and American Goldfinches around, but they seem to be doing just fine with berries, seeds and insects and not dependent on what they usually get at my feeder. As we've seen before, the availability of other food can change abruptly with the weather, so be kind to your birds – you may yet be their lifeline this winter! By springtime, I will also find a place in my yard for one more bird-friendly native plant to add to my berry, seed and bug offerings for the birds in this new year!!

### **We are so pleased to welcome our newest members:**

Jason Strickland  
Michael & Kathi Jaskowiak  
Carol Ball  
Bob & Linda Cole  
David Kleppinger

### **...and our newest members from William & Mary—**

Andrew Elgin  
Claire Murphy  
Isabel Eaton

### **Monthly Bird Walks at New Quarter Park**

The Williamsburg Bird Club and New Quarter Park co-sponsor bird walks at New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Dr., Williamsburg, twice a month--the second and fourth Saturdays. On the second Saturday, we meet at 8 a.m; the fourth Saturday it will begin at 7 a.m. Meet in the parking lot near the park office. Participants can stay as long as they'd like. Generally, the leader will walk about two hours or so, but participants can peel off as they like. Walks are free and open to the public. You need not be a member to join us. Just show up!



## 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Greensprings Boardwalk Bird Show!

Shirley Devan reports that the 11th Annual Greensprings Boardwalk Bird Show was a resounding success with 25 species of birds and 27 birders between 1 and 3 pm. The best bird was this Red-shouldered Hawk, seen by many folks. The attached photo is by John Adair. He writes, "This is a digi-scoped photo of the Red-shouldered Hawk seen by a dozen or so members. He tolerated our presence for about 20 minutes and at one point swooped from one tree to another snatching up a small bird enroute. Following his snack, he departed, after which MANY birds began moving into the area, including Eastern Bluebird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Swamp Sparrow. Our patience was rewarded! [Location: (37.250977, -76.794387); [GoogleMap](#)]. As we were driving out of the parking lot, eagle-eyed Virginia spotted a Cedar Waxwing on a snag by the exit road. Thirty feet further along, there were at least 10 Chipping Sparrows flying from grass to shrubs and back."

**WBC Programs of the Past** Cheryl Jacobson felt our members might be interested in a review of our past 2 years...

January 2014--Barbara Houston-Photography/birding areas in Virginia

February 2014--Libby Mojica--Osprey Population in the Chesapeake Bay and Beyond

March 2014--Fletcher Smith--Northern Saw-whet Owls in Virginia and Autumn Migration on the Lower Delmarva Peninsula

April 2014--William and Mary Grad Students/Grant Recipients

May 2014--Bill Williams-Warbler Identification

September 2014--Dan Cristol--Mercury Pollution and Impact on Birds

October 2014--Bob Schamerhorn/Birding Florida's Hotspots

November 2014--Junco Video--Junco Research/The Ordinary Extraordinary Junco/ Dan Cristol

January 2015--Fletcher Smith-- Winter Marsh Sparrows on the Eastern Shore

February 2015--Pearl Beamer--Rehabilitation/Sacred Friends in Wildlife Rehabilitation (canceled due to storm and rescheduled for May)

March--Fletcher Smith--Red Knots Populations and Climate Change Impact

April 2015--William & Mary Grad Students/Grant Recipients

May 2015-- Pearl Beamer--Rehabilitation/Sacred Friends in Wildlife Rehabilitation

September 2015--Ann and Gary Carpenter--Birding in Texas

October 2015--Andrew Arnold (ODU)-Land bird Migration and Forested Stopover Habitat Evaluation

November 2015--Patti Reum--Kestrel Nest Box Project VSO



### **VSO Annual Meeting – Save the Date!**

The Roanoke Valley Bird Club is hosting the 2016 Virginia Society of Ornithology's Annual Meeting April 29-May 1, 2016. You don't have to be a VSO or RVBC member to attend. In addition to lots of field trips around the Roanoke area Saturday and Sunday mornings, you can also enjoy keynote speaker Pete Dunne at Saturday night's banquet. Pete is a renowned author and speaker, longtime director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, New Jersey Audubon's Birding Ambassador, and founder of the World Series of Birding. Home base for the weekend is the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center at 2801 Hersherberger Rd. Room reservations can be made at 540-563-9300, 800-325-3535, or [www.sheratonroanoke.com](http://www.sheratonroanoke.com). Rates are \$99 plus tax, but you must use the "Virginia Society of Ornithology Annual Meeting 2016"

designation when reserving your room. More details will be forthcoming as they become available, so check our Facebook page or our website at [roanokevalleybirdclub.com](http://roanokevalleybirdclub.com) often. But for now, make plans to attend this fun event! For more information, please contact Alyce Quinn, General Chairman, at [twoquinns@yahoo.com](mailto:twoquinns@yahoo.com).

### **VSO's Outer Banks Field Trip – February 5 – 7, 2016**

Coordinator: Meredith Bell. Leaders: Bill Akers, Jerry Via, Lee Adams and Meredith Bell

Hotel: Comfort Inn South Oceanfront in Nags Head

Friday: All-day trip to Lake Mattamuskeet. Saturday: Pea Island NWR, Bodie Island Lighthouse, Oregon Inlet and other local birding hot spots. Sunday AM: Alligator River NWR. Details are now on the website:

[http://www.virginiabirds.net/f\\_trips.html](http://www.virginiabirds.net/f_trips.html)

All VSO field trips have a registration fee of \$20 for NON-members only. This fee will be applied to an individual membership that will be active until the end of 2016. If 2 or more people from the same family register, the registration fee will be \$25, which covers a family membership. So it pays to be a VSO member! Join today!

### **Woodpecker Relocation Moves Forward**



By Michele Canty

Biologists from several agencies and organizations have come together to make preparations for a historic woodpecker translocation, a coordinated effort to move some Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The effort has been years in the making and will attempt to establish a new population of the federally endangered woodpecker on the refuge.

Virginia represents the northern range limit for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and since the early 2000s, the state population has been restricted to a single breeding site, Piney Grove Preserve. Intensive habitat management by The Nature Conservancy and population management by the Center for Conservation Biology have brought this population back from two breeding groups in 2002 to 14 breeding groups by 2014. However, concentration of all birds within a single site makes the population vulnerable to a catastrophic event.

Establishment of additional breeding sites has been included in the Virginia Red-cockaded Woodpecker conservation plan for several years. William and Mary's Center for Conservation Biology has been part of these efforts, school officials said.

The plan is to move eight birds, four females and four males, to the Great Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge. The birds will be relocated from a population in the Caroline Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge to Great Dismal, which straddles the Virginia-North Carolina border. Efforts have been ongoing for an extended period of time to prepare for the move. Areas within the Great Dismal Swamp have been identified and managed to receive the birds.

*[This article and photo are reprinted with permission from The Virginia Gazette. It originally appeared October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015.]*

### The Townsend's Warbler Saga!

During the early morning bird walk at New Quarter Park on December 26, Bill Williams and members of the Williamsburg Bird Club found an extremely rare bird - a Townsend's Warbler. This is a bird of the Pacific Northwest which usually winters in Mexico or Central America. Instead, it was foraging in hollies and pines at New Quarter in the company of Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a Carolina Chickadee. It's beautiful - rather like a Black-throated Green Warbler with some distinguishing features like the black striping along the sides. Bill thought this was a



*Townsend Warbler photo downloaded from the web*

birders from Richmond. It was posted on the VA-Bird List Serve on Saturday morning and then most of Virginia's top birders converged on New Quarter Park on Sunday! The bird was not seen then or since.

Not only is it a park record, it's only the second local record. Dan Cristol found one at William & Mary in 2004. The first accepted record in Virginia was near Kiptopeke over New Year in 1999-2000. That one was seen by a lot of people as it stayed in the area for two weeks.

### Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships

Three students have been selected to receive the Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships. Out of a powerful field of applications, the committee chose—Bridget Wilson, presently in grade 7; Audrey Root, presently in grade 9; and Jesse Nelson, presently in grade 11. These three students, all returning campers, gratefully accepted their scholarships and will be attending their sessions this summer. They will be coming to the May meeting to be introduced so join us then and meet our winners! I know you'll be proud to be sending these students who will represent the Williamsburg Bird Club so well.



This photo of a Bald Eagle was taken by Nancy Barnhart on the November 12<sup>th</sup> bird walk at New Quarter Park.

### December 26 Bird Walk at New Quarter Park

Front row: Shirley Devan, Virginia Boyles, Jennifer Trevino, Rock Moeslein, David Taylor, Joyce Lowry, Sue Mutell, Nancy Barnhart

Back row: Laura Taylor, Jim Corliss, Bill Williams, Jeanette Navia, George Boyles, Cathy Bond, Tory Gussman, John Adair

Not pictured: Sally Blanchard



### Virginia Beach Pelagic Trips

Brian Patteson will run several winter pelagic trips out of Lynnhaven Inlet aboard his boat, The Stormy Petrel II. Brian is a nationally recognized pelagic trip leader who has been running these trips for many years. The two final trips will be on January 16 and January 23. Both of these trips are Saturdays, with a mandatory weather date on Sunday. The last two January trips are \$195 and will last 12 hours. Trips meet at Lynnhaven promptly at 6:00 a.m. Here is the web site for more details:

<http://www.patteson.com/schedule/201516-va-beach-winter-trips/>.



*Dark-eyed Junco*  
 Photo by Inge Curtis



*Cedar Waxwing*  
 Photo by Inge Curtis

**CALENDAR**

Saturday, January 9	Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 8 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Sunday, January 16	WBC Field Trip to Dutch Gap Conservation Area. Details on page 3.
Saturday, January 16/23	Virginia Beach Pelagic Trips with Brian Patteson; meet at Lynnhaven at 6:00 a.m. Details on page 6.
Sunday, January 17	Hampton Roads Bird Club sponsors Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Meet in the parking lot near Ranger Station.
Wednesday, January 20	Bird Club Meeting, <b>7 PM (note new time)</b> , the Integrated Science Center, Room 1127, W&M Campus.
Saturday, January 23	Bird Walk at New Quarter Park, 7 am. Meet at the parking lot near the office.
Sunday, January 31	Hampton Roads Bird Club sponsors Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Meet in the parking lot near Ranger Station
Sunday, February 7	WBC Field Trip CBBT by Boat. TENTATIVE DATE. Details to be announced soon.
Saturday, February 20	WBC Field Trip to CBBT by Car. Details on page 3.

**A Preview of Brian Watts’ Talk on “Living in a World Full of Hazards”**

Dr. Brian Watts will be speaking to us in February about the topic “Living in a World Full of Hazards”. This is a glimpse into the topic!

Black over red 3-8 was a male peregrine falcon that was hatched on a railroad bridge that crosses the Elizabeth River in Norfolk, VA, in 1993. Within 3 years the bird established a new breeding territory on the Benjamin Harrison Bridge near Hopewell, VA, and produced 27 young over the next 10 years. On 12 February 2007 the bird was found dead near the bridge. Like so many other peregrines that we have tracked over time, the old male flew into a guy wire and was killed.



Male peregrine 3-8 was killed when it flew into a guy wire near its eyrie on the Benjamin Harrison Bridge in 2007. From tracking studies in Virginia we have determined that flying into structures like wires is one of the leading causes of mortality for peregrines. Photo by Bryan Watts.

We kill billions of birds across the globe every year. Many of these birds are like 3-8, unintentional casualties of the infrastructure we have built to support modern society. They fly into hazards that we have erected in their airspace like tall buildings, transmission lines, radio towers, and wind turbines. They are poisoned by chemicals or soiled by oil spills. They become entangled in

fishing gear or are hit by cars or trains or airplanes. Some are killed intentionally by hunters or by people who classify them as pests.

Great blue heron found dead under a roadside power line. Work by The Center for Conservation Biology and other research groups has determined that siting of power lines is the primary factor influencing strike-related mortality. Lines should be sited in areas away from primary flightlines. Photo by Bryan Watts.



Two northern gannets tangled in a long-line fishing rig. Fishing bycatch is a major source of mortality for seabirds throughout the world. Photo by Bryan Watts.

Like with human mortality, we have spent considerable time and effort to quantify the major

causes of death. In the United States alone, we estimate that every year nearly 60 million birds are killed by vehicles, 50 million are killed by communication towers, 70 million are killed by pesticides and possibly as many as 1 billion are killed when they fly into buildings. A [recent study](#) has estimated that free-ranging domestic cats in the United States kill more than 1 billion birds annually. Understanding mortality factors is an important step toward improving survival. However, mortality factors represent only one side of the story.



American robin hit by a car along a major interstate. Vehicle strikes are estimated to kill 60 million birds, including mostly passerines, annually in the United States alone. Photo by Bart Paxton.

From a conservation perspective, the central question is not how many individuals are killed annually but whether populations have the capacity to absorb the mortality incurred and still reach management objectives. Understanding the relationship between realized mortality rates and sustainable mortality limits serves to focus management actions on factors that have the potential to cause population declines. Over the past several years, The Center for Conservation

Biology has been borrowing from harvest theory to estimate sustainable mortality limits for species of conservation concern.



Female osprey shot on nest along the York River in Virginia while incubating two eggs. This type of indiscriminate poaching is illegal and has no place in modern society. Photo by Andy Glass.

In 2010, CCB evaluated sustainable mortality limits for waterbird populations using the Western North Atlantic to provide a foundation for understanding potential impacts of offshore wind development (read [Wind and Waterbirds](#)). More recently, we have worked with the Canadian Wildlife Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to estimate sustainable mortality limits for populations of migratory shorebirds using the Atlantic Flyway to better understand the potential impact of shorebird hunting. A paper from this work will be published

during the summer of 2015 and is [now available online](#). Following this effort, we have recently worked to estimate sustainable mortality limits for shorebirds using the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to better understand how hunting and other factors may be causing population declines.



A “bag” of shorebirds from a hunting swamp on Guadeloupe. The Center has been focused on modeling mortality limits for shorebirds to better understand how hunting may be involved in ongoing population declines. Photo by Anthony Levesque.

*Written by Bryan Watts | [bdwatt@nm.edu](mailto:bdwatt@nm.edu) | (757) 221-2247  
July 8, 2015*