



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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March 2018

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



Happy month three of the Year of the Bird! I promised to send out several suggestions each month of things you can do to support Year of the Bird. My four suggestions this month are:

1). Participate in the Virginia Breeding Bird Survey (see the synopsis on page three). This is a meaningful and enjoyable project because you spend time carefully observing bird behavior. You might see a bird carrying nesting material and watch where it is going and later find its nest. You may discover a nest with eggs or hatchlings and later you might find fledglings. All of this is so rewarding. I was so excited to find a nest with Gray Catbird eggs and later a nest with Northern Cardinal hatchlings. See pictures on page three.

There will be a training on April 13th by Ashley Peele (Project Coordinator who is based at the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech) and Dave Youker (a member of WBC and Region 11 Leader) at Freedom Park at 9:30 am. We are exploring many fun ways of surveying in our assigned blocks, including working in mini teams and conducting a monthly first Saturday walk/survey in a somewhat close priority block. Don't miss out on the fun!! Mark your calendar and save the date.

If you are unable to attend a weekday training, the WBC is invited to join the Hampton Roads Bird Club on Saturday morning, April 14th. I will send more details once the location of that training is determined. Also, you can explore more by going to: <http://amjv.org/index.php/vabba2/about>.

2). Reduce your use of paper. If you indicated that you wanted to receive a hard copy of your newsletter, consider changing that option to an email version. Think green and save the environment. Perhaps most importantly, when we save paper, we reduce the need to cut down trees to make new paper.

(Continued Page 2)

PROGRAMS

W&M ANDREWS HALL, ROOM 101

By Judy Jones

DR. DAN CRISTOL MARCH 21ST @ 7PM

Our very own WBC member, Dr. Dan Cristol will discuss the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and concerns regarding factors impacting it under the current Administration. All WBC members are encouraged to participate in a letter writing session at the end of the meeting, where stamps will be made available.

FUTURE WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB (WBC) PROGRAMS

APRIL 18th – As always, our April meeting is a very special one, with research grant recipients presenting their findings. These three folks are Master students in the Biology Department at W&M and their research is just fascinating. Speaking first will be Jasmine Parham whose research was about “The Dietary Transfer of Mercury in the South River Floodplain.” Also speaking will be Robert Galvin, whose topic, “Investigating Wading Bird Use of Natural Fringing Marshes and Living Shorelines” sounds equally interesting. Finally, Rachel Davis will talk about “Mercury Exposure on Tissue-specific Reduction in Telomere Length at Multiple Developmental Ages in the Zebra Finch.” Please come join us for an interesting and very educational evening.

MAY 16th – In May, Susan Powell will be our speaker. As a dedicated birder and well-respected authority on all things avian, she will be sharing with us ways to improve our birding proficiency as well as a quick review on bird markings and ways to improve our identification skills. Come join us on May 16th for this opportunity to make your birding experiences even more successful.

WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2018



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Anything we can do to save paper will help reduce the amount of trash going into landfills, and it will also reduce energy use and pollution associated with manufacturing, transporting, and recycling new paper products.

Moreover, the dollars that are saved from copying and postage can be utilized by the WBC for projects that have a positive impact for birds.

You can email Jeanette Navia at: jnavia@gmail.com and ask her to change your option to the email version of the newsletter. We absolutely do want you to enjoy and have access to our newsletter, so if you do not have a computer or other device to view via email, please continue to receive a hard copy.

3). Participate in Osprey Watch, a project launched in 2012 by The Center for Conservation Biology to engage a global community to collect data on breeding Osprey. Find out more by going to <http://www.osprey-watch.org> and perhaps you will decide to become an Osprey Watcher along with many in the area who are mapping their nests, logging their observations, and uploading their photos.

4). Support the Migratory Bird Treaty Act: Let your Representative to Congress know that you oppose HR 4329. If HR 4329 passes, it would reduce, and in most cases remove, the obligation for industry to implement common-sense practices that prevent bird deaths. By no longer covering "incidental take," the bill would end incentives for industries to adopt reasonable practices such as covering oil waste pits or reducing bird electrocutions and collisions from power lines, and end accountability from bird deaths including from major oil spills like Deepwater Horizon.

You can go to Audubon's web site and utilize their sample message found at: <http://www.audubon.org/news/the-migratory-bird-treaty-act-explained>. Simply click on the orange, Take Action button at the top of the page and then Defend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

I want to extend a special welcome to our new members: Scott Hemler, Diana Lenahan, Olivia Lenahan-Tulls, John Schwenker, Bill Vanzetta, and Carolyn D. Williams. I look forward to meeting each of you!

Again, I leave you with this thought:

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together ... all things connect."

— Chief Seattle

VIRGINIA'S SECOND BREEDING BIRD ATLAS – SHOWCASING THE VALUE OF CITIZEN SCIENCE FOR CONSERVATION RESEARCH

Project Vision: Virginia's birds represent a rich cultural and ecological heritage, a living legacy tied to our own identity. We believe that conservation of our natural resources is the province of all people, so it is our responsibility to monitor and protect.

What is the VABBA2? It is a 5-year statewide inventory of all bird species breeding in Virginia, from the Great Dismal Swamp to the spruce-fir forests of the western mountains. This project will raise awareness of bird conservation issues and how we can all contribute to their stewardship.

Who is involved? The VABBA2 is a project of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO), coordinated by an Atlas Coordinator based at the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech. Other important partner organizations include: eBird, Virginia Audubon Council and Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture. They are actively seeking to partner with local bird clubs, Audubon and Virginia Master Naturalists chapters, plus other interested organizations.



Why is the VABBA2 unique? This will be the single largest citizen science-based project conducted in Virginia, relying on not only state agencies and non-profits for support, but hundreds of volunteers to help collect field data on bird occurrence and breeding status across the state.

Why is it important? Data collected by volunteers will provide critical data on the status and distribution of Virginia's birds, informing management and guiding conservation strategies.

How do I get involved? They need many volunteers to collect Atlas data, as well as assist in spreading the word through outreach efforts. Please visit the VABBA2 website (www.vabba2.org) for more information about participating in this exciting and ambitious project.



NEW LOCATION FOR MARCH 10TH BIRD WALK - LAKE MATOAKA

By Jim Corliss

We originally planned for the March 10th walk to be in the Ware Creek Wildlife Management Area, but recent trips to Ware Creek haven't turned up many birds. So, we're making this change to Lake Matoaka in the hopes of enjoying as "birdy" of a morning as possible.



Our “Second-Saturday” bird walk in March will be around Lake Matoaka and College Woods adjacent to William & Mary in the heart of Williamsburg. This area is one of our local birding hot spots that offers views over the lake, walks through low-lying areas and ravines, plus trails through mature forest. Our leader for the Lake Matoaka walk will be Nancy Barnhart. The walk will begin at 8:00 am.

We are still working out the logistics for the best meeting place with adequate parking near the trail. We will send out an e-mail with that information and post it on our web site as soon as it is available. This will be a great opportunity for a beautiful walk right in our own backyard, and probably the best walk we’ll ever have when it comes to coffee shops being available before and after the walk! We hope to see you there.

REPORTED SIGHTINGS FROM JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2018

(Photo credit is attributed to authors of the sightings, unless otherwise noted.)

January 19-20th: On a recent business trip to Orange County, California, Bringier McConnell managed to do a bit of incidental bird watching. Happily, Bringier made the acquaintance of several new life birds. Favorites included the elegant Western Grebe in Newport Beach Harbor and a California Scrub-Jay, a California Towhee, and three Nuttall’s Woodpeckers in Laguna Beach Canyon. Bringier also visited San Juan Capistrano to see the mission, knowing the swallows were still deep in Patagonia somewhere, but was more than compensated for that loss while dining in a garden nearby when two incandescent Townsend’s Warblers danced in the branches of a live Oak tree just six feet over our heads for 15 minutes!



February 5th: Craig Hill went birding in Florida and shares his sightings. A Red-winged Blackbird (left) and Wood Storks (below left) were spotted at the Wakodahatchee Wetlands. It is mating season there and the Storks were quite friendly with each other.



While in the Cruickshank Sanctuary, Craig and Donnie were looking everywhere for about 15 minutes when five Florida Scrub-Jays showed up to say hello (photo above right by Donnie Goodrich). Sandhill Cranes (pictured right) from Orlando were quite curious, while we loaded into the vehicle.

February 8th: Elbert Cutright reports about a week ago, our beautiful Baltimore Oriole (photo on page five) returns! Several times since his arrival we have not seen him for a few days, but this week I was able to take a few images, although at times I was clicking with a little drizzle coming down!



February 10th: Patty Maloney shared the bird walk with Waller Mill Elementary School. Jan Lockwood, Lee Schuster and Patty lead these walks weekly with 25 5th-grade students, and the students participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count. The 3rd Quarter Issue of the 4-H Schoolyard Nature Notes has some great links to various bird sites, check it out at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0l4jelSMCUZTm10M19HT251SHhDcnpGZnRZUlo2VklGbkxB/view?usp=sharing>



February 21st: Nancy Barnhart reports Wild Turkeys (pictured below) flying in for the evening behind her home.

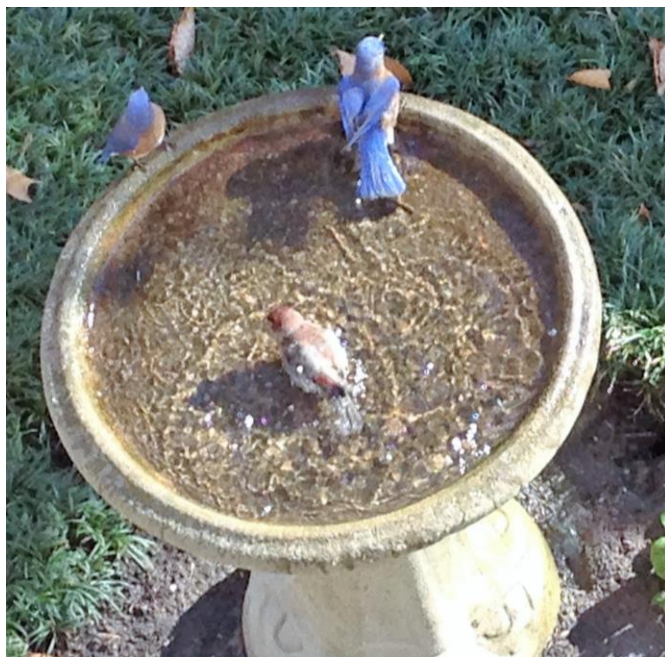


February 22nd: Vincent Lager reports Eastern Bluebirds. He urges you to check out his bill (pictured below), which is wide open and ready for the mealworms!

Mary Haines reports two bluebirds sharing bath time with a finch (or two). The picture (below right) was taken over a month ago, an unusually early appearance for bluebirds in her yard.



February 23rd: Tom McCary was excited to have excellent views of nine Common Mergansers on Swift Creek Reservoir in Midlothian, Virginia. Tom reports seven females and two males.



COLLEGE CREEK BIRD WALK FEBRUARY 10TH

By Judy Jones



On Saturday, the Williamsburg Bird Club began a new tradition. Our second Saturday bird walks will now be held at a rotating series of sites while our fourth Saturday bird walk will remain at New Quarter Park. We began this new tradition with a two hour walk at College Creek, where 27 enthusiastic birders, members of the Bird Club and new friends from the community, joined leader Jim Corliss. Together, birders saw a variety of species ranging from immature Bald Eagles to Song Sparrows, Great Blue Herons to a Belted Kingfisher. It was a lovely morning and heralds well the start of some exciting new birding adventures for our Williamsburg Bird Club. Check out the walk's eBird checklist here: <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S42641930>.

HARRIS'S HAWK, TAWNY FROGMOUTH, BARN OWL, AND BALD EAGLE, OH MY!

By Cathy Millar

Birds were the rock stars of our Club's February meeting. Jan Lockwood introduced Cassie Landon, Jennifer Lafontaine, and Diane Mutton who are specialists in caring for the animals, birds, and reptiles at Busch Gardens and educating the public about wildlife and wildlife conservation. The Sea World and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund has donated over 14 million dollars to conservation efforts since its inception in 2003.

Jennifer began by telling us about new avian additions to Busch Gardens. Their aviary now includes two exotic looking Lady Ross's Turacos, a species that are the only ones to have true red pigment in their feathers. Six months ago, a white Homing Pigeon whose banding showed that it had come from New Jersey was found at Busch Gardens and given a home and the name Pearl since the owner could not be found. Last month they received two rescue Bald Eagles, Taft and Roosevelt, bringing their total number of Bald Eagles to six.

As Jennifer was talking, a lovely predominantly chestnut-red Harris's Hawk named Diane was being brought around the room by a coworker for us to get a close look. Whereas in the wild, the normal life span is 12-15 years, Diane is a feisty 27 years old who's been known to fly into the Bald Eagle sanctuary. Harris's Hawks are native to the Southwestern U.S. down to Central America and parts of South America. An unusual feature of this raptor is that they hunt cooperatively in packs of two to five hawks (like wolves) so they can capture bigger prey, like jack rabbits, that they could not do on their own. With a shortage of tall

trees in their habitat, they also have the unusual behavior of ‘stacking’ whereupon up to four birds with the most dominant one on top will stand on each other’s backs to better see prey and predators.

The next guest looked almost more like a Muppet than a bird with its large head and abnormally wide and triangular shaped beak that is used to catch insects and rodents. Hatched at a San Antonio Zoo, it was an almost three-year-old Tawny Frogmouth named Pistachio because of the lime-green color of the inside of its mouth. They are native to Australia and Tasmania and in the nightjar family. They are weak fliers and spend most of the time camouflaged using a behavior called ‘stumping’ wherein the bird holds its body upright with feathers held in tight and eyes closed so it resembles the stump of a branch. Unlike most birds of prey, they have weak feet with which they are unable to grasp their prey so instead will grab a rodent with the beak and fling it against a tree and then swallow it whole.

The third guest was a seven-year-old Barn Owl whose name was Cupid because of its heart-shaped face (photo by Inge Curtis). His parents were rescue cases at a West VA facility, and he was hatched under human care, hand-raised and deemed as not



releasable since he doesn’t know how to hunt. The Barn Owl’s exceptional hearing with their asymmetrically placed ears was put to a test in an indoor stadium where mice had been released on a leaf littered floor. After the owls were acclimated, the lights were turned off and the owls were able to catch the mice in complete darkness. Contrary to legends of being wise, an owl is difficult to train because the brain is smaller than one of its big eyeballs since the eyeballs take up most of the space in the head. Jennifer pointed out that with 40 neck vertebrae compared to our seven, they can rotate their head 270 degrees both ways compared to our 90-degree rotation. They are native to every continent except Antarctica. In the three months of a nesting pair raising five chicks, they can kill close to 5,000 mice! Owls do not have a crop whereas other raptors do, which along with low acidity of digestive juices is why owls ‘cast’ or spit-up pellets of bones, feather, fur and insect parts.

The grand finale was Lincoln, an almost five-year-old Bald Eagle. Since he is just reaching maturity, his head feathers were not completely white but had a slight brown cast. His eyes are also slowly lightening from brown to bright yellow. All six bald eagles at Busch Gardens are rescues. Five have permanent wing injuries. The oldest is Penny who is over 40 years old. Lincoln was found as a fledgling with an ulcer in his left eye. He was treated at the Audubon Bird of Prey Center in Maitland, Florida (Jennifer urged us to take one of their tours) and Lincoln arrived at Busch Gardens shortly afterwards. He is fully flighted which he kept displaying by impressively flapping his wings. Bald Eagles are a great symbol of conservation efforts. In the 1960’s there were fewer than 500 pairs in North America. Measures, especially the banning of DDT, have led to a remarkable comeback, and they are no longer endangered although still federally protected. Any feathers that the Bald Eagles drop are required by law to be sent to the Fish and Wildlife Services who give most of them to Native Americans for making ceremonial pieces.

This led to Jennifer discussing the importance of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act established in 1918. This Act is now being threatened by the Trump administration with proposals to allow industries to kill birds with impunity and remove incentive for companies to take common sense precautions. She urged us to go to www.audubon.org and click on the article about the Act. There is a ‘Take Action’ button to click, which takes just a couple of minutes to fill out a protest that is sent to our political representatives.

Jennifer and her coworkers ended their presentation with the Red-shouldered Hawk, Diane, taking a couple of very low flights over the thrilled audience and a meet-and-greet with a couple of the birds.

BARN OWL POPULATIONS / NEED FOR NEST BOXES

By Cheryl Jacobson

I think the entire crowd of 80 plus Master Naturalists and Williamsburg Bird Club members fell in love with the Barn Owl from Busch Gardens at the February meeting (photo by Inge Curtis). I asked the question about the stability of the Barn Owl Population, because I had heard that it was severely declining due to loss of habitat, mainly old barns, out-buildings, and silos. When I lived in California, the Barn Owls were resorting to laying their eggs in the palm fronds because there were few structures available. When a small wind storm would come up, the eggs would actually roll out of the palms and break.

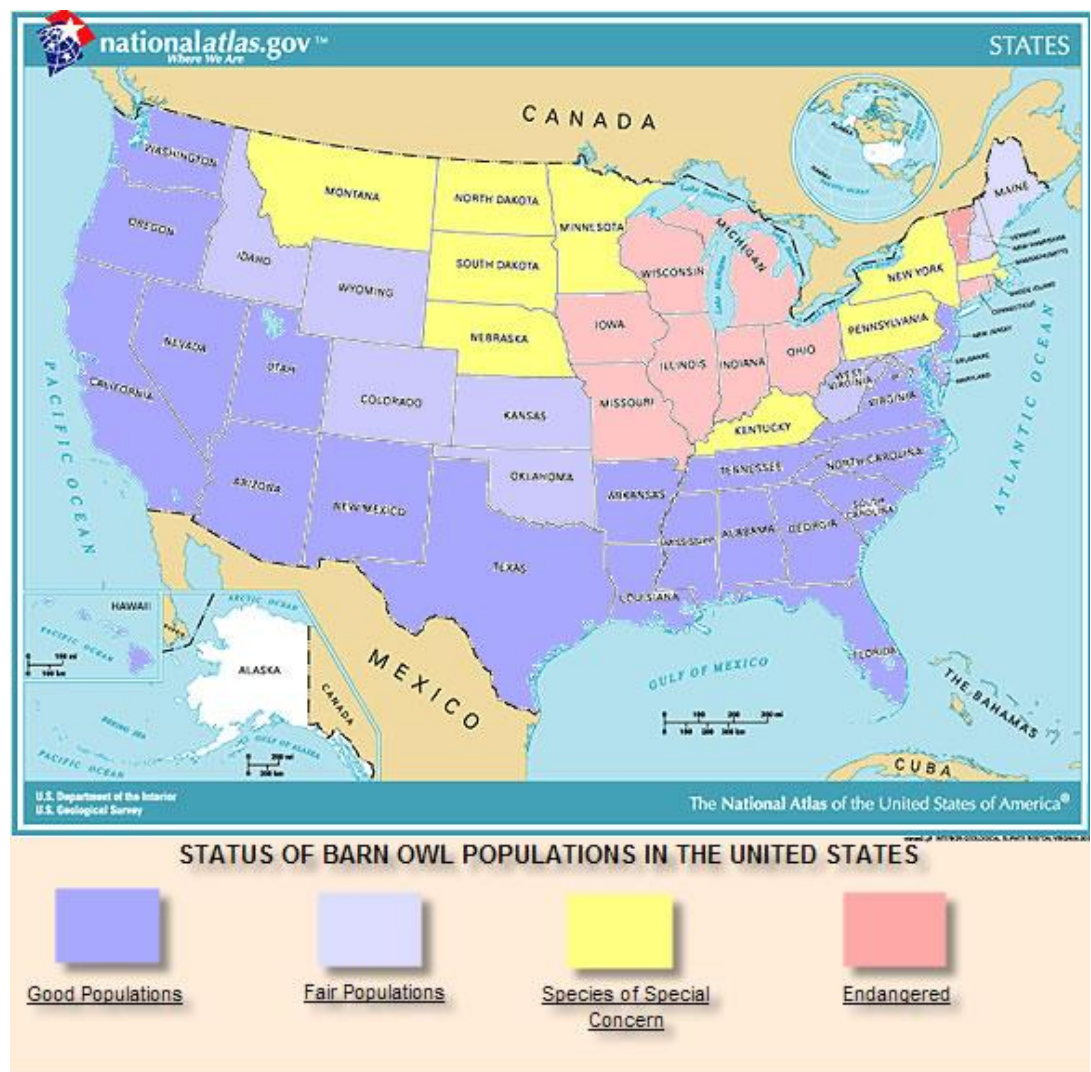
I was surprised at the answer from the Busch Gardens representative that the population is very stable. Therefore, I went to the internet to find out more details. I learned that in Virginia the population stability is good. However, in many areas of the United States the Barn Owl population is in trouble. The map below shows you that in 16 states the Barn Owl is either endangered or considered a species of concern.

Pink: Endangered; these states may have already suffered such losses of Barn Owls that habitat restoration combined with nest box programs may be necessary to bring back any significant numbers.

Yellow: Species of Special Concern; these states have seen declining populations. They are excellent states for conservation-oriented nest box erection programs in areas of good Barn Owl habitat.

Light Blue: Fair populations; these states offer excellent opportunities to establish robust populations of Barn Owls for natural rodent control and integrated pest management.

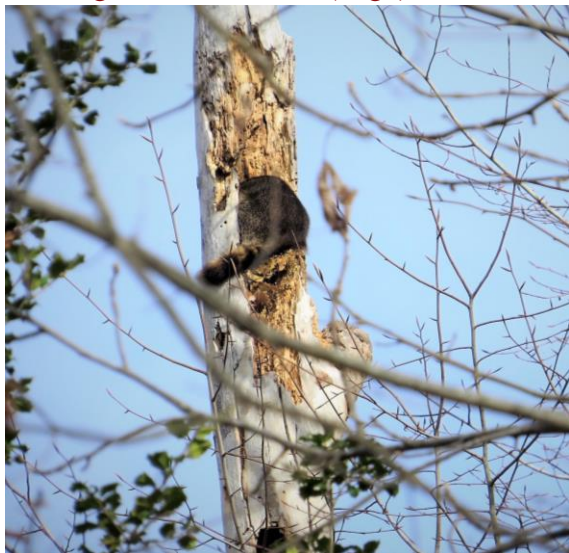
Dark Blue: Good populations; these states have such high populations of Barn Owls that nest boxes are inhabited relatively quickly and occupied at relatively high rates. In such states, Barn Owls will tend to have more than one brood per year. Excellent states to use Barn Owls in sophisticated rodent control programs.



Virginia Barn Owls – Common on the coastal plain and very robust populations along the coast and Chesapeake Bay. Rare in the mountainous western edge. Good concentrations in the Shenandoah Valley, and researchers there report that old silos are a frequent nesting site and that Barn Owls actually burrow hollows in the old silage to lay their eggs and raise their chicks.

NEW QUARTER PARK (NQP) BIRD WALK FEBRUARY 24TH

By Jim Corliss



We had another great group of birders for our February 24th bird walk in New Quarter Park. Still no Osprey in the park yet, but we had great views of an immature Bald Eagle posing on a snag, along with Buffleheads, a lone Canvasback, and a small group of Green-winged Teal. Two Cooper's Hawks also performed fly-overs to remind us that birds are getting their engines revved up for spring migration. The non-avian highlight of the day was a raccoon (pictured left) snoozing near the top of a dead tree. It wasn't showing us its best side, but it was still fun to watch.

Check out the walk's eBird checklist here:

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S43144272>

(Group photo taken by Sara Lewis)



MARCH 11TH FIELD TRIP TO CURLES NECK PLANTATION (REGISTRATION IS FULL)

Geoff Giles scored a great field trip for March 11, 2018. **This is a Sunday and registration is full (limited to 20 participants).** Curles Neck Plantation (also known as Curles Neck Farm) is located between State Route 5 and the north bank of the James River in the Varina district of Henrico County, Virginia. One of the great James River Plantations, Curles Neck has remained in active use for almost 400 years and remains a privately-owned working farm which is not currently open to the public. Curles Neck Farm is a 5,600-acre property and because it is a private property the owner only allows restricted access. Our leader will be Ellison Orcutt.

WELCOME NEW WBC MEMBERS – WE LOOK FORWARD TO BIRDING WITH YOU!

Scott Hemler, Diana Lenahan, Olivia Lenahan-Tulls, John Schwenker, Bill Vanzetta, Carolyn D. Williams

SUPPORT OUR LOCALLY OWNED BIRD STORES & FELLOW WBC MEMBERS!

Backyard Birder



Backyard Birder Seed & Supply located in Williamsburg at the Quarterpath Crossing Shopping Center near the Kingsmill Harris Teeter gives each WBC member a 10% discount on purchases. 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 gives a 5% rebate to the WBC on the pre-tax amount spent in store by WBC members. Please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout. <https://williamsburg.wbu.com/>

CALENDAR

March 10 - 8 am	UPDATED: WBC sponsors a Bird Walk at Lake Matoaka and College Woods
March 11	Field Trip to Curles Neck Plantation (Registration if Full)
March 21 - 7 pm	WBC Meeting & Program (Dr. Dan Cristol)
March 24 - 8 am	WBC sponsors a Bird Walk at New Quarter Park.
March 31	New Kent Forestry Center, Day in the Forest Event. More to Follow.
April 13 - 9:30 am	Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas Training, Freedom Park Training Room
April 14 - 8 am	WBC sponsors a Bird Walk at Chickahominy Park