



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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williamsburgbirdclub.org

November 2018

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl Jacobson



November has arrived and with it the beginning of the busy Holiday Season, so let me be one of the first to wish you a Happy Holiday! The good news is you still have time to engage in an activity to assist birds in this Year of the Bird.

First some important Club business – election of WBC Executive Board. Please see the list of current Executive Board Members on page 2 of this newsletter. Please note that Committee Chairpersons are not elected. Our by-laws state: Election of officers shall be held at the last Club meeting of the year. Any member is eligible for any office. Usually at the October meeting a Nominating committee is designated. However, this year the entire Executive Board has indicated a desire to continue another year and a Nominating Committee will not be designated. The current Executive Board is presented as the proposed slate for election as the by-laws require. The slate shall be presented to the membership via the November issue (usually) of the Club's monthly newsletter, and from the podium during the November meeting. Election will take place at the November meeting. Nominations will be invited for any office and may be made from the floor at the November meeting prior to voting by the membership. All nominees must have indicated their willingness to serve, if elected.

The two hurricanes that hit the southern United States are on all of our minds and hearts as the devastation was extensive and there are still many reeling from the after-effects of the storms.

While our fellow humans continue to piece their lives back together, many in the birding world have been asking how these storms and the unseasonably warm weather have or will affect bird migration this fall.

In searching the web, it seems that it's simply too early to tell. To make any real assessments of the damage, if any, these storms have caused our birds will take some time.

(Continued Page 2)

BIRDING AND RESEARCH ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

By Judy Jones

NOTE date change – November 14, 2018

Location: W&M Integrated Science Center, Room 1127

We are thrilled to welcome Fletcher Smith, Research Biologist with The Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) at W&M and VCU. Fletcher works with a diversity of bird species throughout the western hemisphere, following migrants from their breeding to winter grounds. He's currently researching Whimbrels, Red Knots, Marsh Sparrows, and neo-tropical migrants. He also manages the Saw-whet Owl banding program for CCB. His talk will feature information about the birds and animals encountered each summer *(Continued Page 3)*

NOVEMBER 17 FIELD TRIP TO BEAVERDAM PARK IN GLOUCESTER COUNTY

By Geoff Giles

Our November field trip is Saturday, November 17, 2018, to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester! This is great habitat for the birds we can expect to find in that season of transition from fall to winter. Many of the birds that nest in our area in summer have gone to wintering grounds farther south, and many colorful and interesting species that nested in the northern woods or tundra have moved into our friendlier climate to winter with us. This trip will take us to good habitat where we expect to see a variety of water fowl and songbirds. Have you seen a Pied-billed Grebe yet this fall? Seen an eagle hunting ducks and coots? Bet you will on this trip! The best part is that this park is relatively close to us, and is birder friendly, with flat terrain, ample parking and comfort stops.

(Continued Page 4)

WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2018



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(Continued from Page 1)

While there were certainly casualties, it is believed that many birds survived (as they always do) the harrowing weather conditions. In fact, birds have a variety of strategies for dealing with large storms, such as hurricanes, including leaving the area, flying ahead of, or into the storm, or sheltering in place.

Migratory birds are able to complete their epic journeys while living on a knife's-edge of calories in and out. If a storm knocks them off course by a day or more, they may not have the fat reserves to make up the loss.

“Habitat loss is the biggest risk for birds of conservation concern, especially migratory species that need refueling locations to complete the journey,” says Gary Langham, vice president and chief scientist at the National Audubon Society.

The tempest-like winds that accompany a hurricane can strip the leaves off of trees and beat down other forms of vegetation to the point where both local and migrant birds alike are left without cover. This leaves birds exposed to predators and without shelter from the elements. What's more, food such as insects, fruits, and seeds can be completely blown away.

Hurricanes and other disastrous storms demonstrate the need to increase coastal resiliency to protect birds and communities in a changing climate. Coastal resiliency projects that restore wildlife habitat such as wetlands, beaches, and barrier islands also protect birds, nesting habitat, and coastal communities from extreme weather events. Policies that protect and restore our coasts are needed now, more than ever.

Here are a few more ideas on how we can help birds. I suggest you begin with this thought: “Setting goals is the first step in turning the invisible into the Visible.” – *Tony Robbins*

Remember that you don't have to make a big change to have impact. Just trying one new small change to your routine at a time can create progress. It can take a little time—several months on average—for new habits to become second nature. One small change might be to:

Skip the Plastic Straws – a convenience but also a major threat to wildlife. Ridding straws from your life is no easy feat. Americans alone use 500 million each day, after all. Most of the time they are provided without consent and thrown out thoughtlessly. But they can also be necessary—especially if you suffer from certain medical conditions. If you don't need them, don't use them. I have finally gotten into the routine of telling my server to skip the straw as soon as I sit down at a restaurant, and I use a refillable cup at my local coffee shop. And if you do need to use a straw, try a sustainable alternative. There are straws made of bamboo and paper, stainless steel and titanium. There are even straws made of straw! And there are straws that are reusable and can be washed in your dish washer.

(Continued Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2)



Buy A Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or simply called a Duck Stamp: Over \$1 billion for conservation and counting.

Every year I anticipate the return of our ducks and one of my favorite field trips is to Dutch Gap to see a variety of birds and ducks. When I think of our returning ducks, I remember to buy a Duck Stamp. You can buy the 2018–2019 stamp at many post offices, National Wildlife Refuge offices, and sporting-goods stores, as well as online from USPS and the duck stamp web site: <https://www.duckstamp.com>

The first stamp was issued in 1934. By law, the funds raised go directly to habitat acquisition in the lower 48 states. By now, stamp sales have surpassed \$1 billion and helped to protect 6.5 million acres of wetland and grassland habitat. Besides ducks, the funds benefit scores of other bird species, including shorebirds, herons, raptors, and songbirds, not to mention reptiles, amphibians, fish, butterflies, native plants, and more.

Actually, Remember Your Reusable Bag: You probably already have plenty of reusable bags, but the tricky part is remembering to take them anywhere. Here are some solutions: Store one in everything you take with you—your purse, backpack, gym bag—and if you drive to the store, in your car. You want bags everywhere. There’s just one hard part: When you return home, don’t forget to put them back. And if you’re still worried you’ll forget them, just add “reusable bag” to your shopping list.

For now, I hope you have a great fall and I hope to see you on the trail!

BIRDING AND RESEARCH ABOVE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

(Continued from Page 1)

over the three years he lived in a field camp on the tundra on Bathurst Island in the Arctic Circle.

This will be an especially notable evening, not only because of our incredible speaker, but also because we’ll be sharing the evening with the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. Our joint meeting will be held on the **SECOND WEDNESDAY** of the month November 14, rather than the third, and the Historic Rivers Chapter members are eager to join us to listen to the always-interesting Fletcher Smith. Learn more about CCB here: <https://ccbbirds.org>

Please mark your calendars and join us! It will be an educational as well as enjoyable evening.

NEXT PROGRAM

January 16, 2019, Bob Schamerhorn returns to share his wonderful photographs in a talk entitled “Atlantic Coastal Birds,” discussing our favorite shorebirds, and examining their habitats, migration patterns, and the challenges each species faces.

BIRD CLUB DONATES BOOKS TO WILLIAMSBURG REGIONAL LIBRARY

Each year the Bird Club funds purchases of books and DVDs for the local Williamsburg Regional Library and James City County Library. Lee Schuster, our Library Liaison, works with the Library to select new titles. Your membership dues fund these purchases at the Library every year. Thank you! Look for these titles at the library:

Birdmania by Bernd Brunner

Birds Art Life by Kyo MacLear

Far From Land by Michael Brooke

Living on the Wind by Scott Weidensaul

Ravens in Winter by Bernd Heinrich

Water Babies by William Burt

The Wonderful Mr. Willughby: The First True Ornithologist by Tim Birkhead

Flock Together by B.J. Hollars

Gifts of the Crow by John Marzluff

The Peregrine Returns by Mary Hennen

A Shadow Above by Joe Shute



Bald Eagle photo by Judy Jones

NOVEMBER 17 FIELD TRIP

(Continued from Page 1)

For those wishing to carpool or caravan, we will depart from Colony Square shopping center (on Jamestown Road just south of the 199 intersection) at 8:00 am Saturday, 17 November. For those traveling separately, we plan to be at the park headquarters about 9:00 am. We plan to bird until about noon, and anyone wishing to join us afterwards for lunch in Gloucester is most welcome. We're sure some cool birds will be there, and we hope you'll join us. Friends and families are most welcome. For any questions feel free to call Geoff Giles at [757-645-8716](tel:757-645-8716).

WHAT IS AN "ACOUSTIC LIGHTHOUSE"?

by Cathy Millar

It's likely that you've not heard the term, "Acoustic Lighthouse," before. Dr. John Swaddle, W&M biology professor and cofounder with Dr. Dan Cristol of the Institute for Integrative Bird Behavior Studies, coined this term to describe the technology that he and former W&M grad student, Nicole Ingrassia (a former recipient of our club's grad student grant) have been developing. As our October 17, 2018 guest speaker, Dr. Swaddle delivered the fascinating presentation: *Developing an "Acoustic Lighthouse" to Reduce Birds' Risk of Collision in Flight*.

Dr. Swaddle reported that annually one billion birds die from collisions with tall structures such as skyscrapers, cell phone towers and wind turbines. For bird species that are already at risk, these collisions can put them at risk for local extinctions. There is a great need for a decent balance between bird conservation and economic development. Whole wind farms have been shut down for weeks because of one single bird collision of a species of concern. Out west, Duke Energy was fined one million dollars for a Golden Eagle strike against a wind turbine. On the East coast, the planning of offshore and near-shore wind development has raised great concern about impact on birds.

He described birds being vulnerable due to their eyes being widely spaced on the sides of their head, so they are looking down and to the side when flying in a normal horizontal position which optimizes flight and minimizes aerodynamic drag. But this leaves a big blind spot directly in front of them. The challenge therefore is to find a way to get birds to slow down and look up in time to avoid tall obstacles. He likened it to the need for honking a horn to alert a texting driver.

Using a mist net as a nonlethal obstacle, he and Nicole experimented with 16 captive Zebra Finches to find what would alert the birds to the obstacle. They found that a column of sound placed in front of the net slowed the birds down as they "put their brakes on" by angling their tail underneath their body and became more vertical so that they noticed the net. Two birds even avoided it. The data implied that sound in front of a structure reduces the risk of collision. Highlighting the importance of just getting birds to slow down, he noted that birds in the wild that hit an obstacle in a more vertical posture rather than head-on have a better chance of survival. Field tests are now needed to see if birds in the wild will respond in a similar way. Working with colleagues at Purdue University to discover what type of sound is most noticeable to birds in a natural environment, they found that high-pitched sweeping sounds not normally heard stimulated the most neurological activity in many species. Specially designed one-way directional focused beamed speakers are being made in Bulgaria. Field tests starting here on cell towers in Williamsburg are scheduled to begin this spring. There is great hope that in the future the "Acoustic Lighthouse" concept can save the lives of thousands, perhaps millions of birds.

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – SUNDAY DEC 16

By James Corliss

Please join us this year for the National Audubon Society's 119th Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Our count day will be Sunday, December 16th, during which our field teams will survey all of the birds seen or heard across eleven sectors in our 15-mile diameter count circle centered around Williamsburg. In addition to the field teams, we rely on a growing army of feeder watchers who count the birds at their feeders, back yards, and neighborhoods to help us form a complete picture of how our bird populations have been changing over time.



Baltimore Orioles at Mary Ellen Hodges's feeder during 2017 Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to get involved in the longest-running citizen science project in the United States. Anyone can choose to team up with a party in the field or volunteer to be a feeder watcher right at home. Whatever you can contribute, even if it's just for a few hours, is valuable to the success of our count. The more eyes we have in the field, or on our feeders, will make the day more fun for everyone and help us provide the best data we can to this important project. More information about the CBC can be found on the Audubon Society's web site:

<http://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>. If you want to get involved but you're not sure what to do, then contact Jim Corliss and he will help connect you with a sector coordinator. Phone: [757-755-1544](tel:757-755-1544). Email: jcorliss240@cox.net.

WELCOME NEW WBC MEMBERS – Calvin Morris, Vic Denyz, and Harry Heiss. We look forward to birding with you! Thank you for joining our flock!



Photo by Shirley Devan

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH BEGINS NOVEMBER 10

It's a fun citizen science project! Three easy steps:

1. Put up a feeder.
2. Count birds.
3. Enter your data.

2018-2019 FeederWatch season begins Saturday, November 10 and ends April 5, 2019. You can start any time within that period, but the earliest date you can record data is November 10.

This project is sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. There is a nominal fee: annual participation fee is \$18 for U.S. residents (\$15 for Cornell Lab members).

From Project FeederWatch web site: When thousands of FeederWatchers across North America count birds and send their tallies to the FeederWatch database, the result is a treasure trove of numbers, which FeederWatch scientists analyze to draw a picture of winter bird abundance and distribution.

The massive amounts of data collected by FeederWatchers across the continent help scientists understand:

- long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance
- the timing and extent of winter irruptions of winter finches and other species.
- expansions or contractions in the winter ranges of feeder birds
- the kinds of foods and environmental factors that attract birds
- how disease is spread among birds that visit feeders

Not sure you can ID your birds? This is an excellent way to learn! To get more details and sign up: <https://feederwatch.org> MANY resources to help you learn! BONUS: Enter the photo contest too!

RECENT PHOTOS FROM OUR MEMBERS



Great Blue Heron by Judy Jones, James River, August 26, 2018



Scarlet Tanager by Nancy Barnhart, York River State Park, October 17, 2018



Great Egret by Judy Jones, James River, August 26, 2018



Red-eyed Vireo by Inge Curtis, Eastern Shore, October 13, 2018



Blue-headed Vireo by Nancy Barnhart, York River State Park, October 17, 2018



Red-breasted Nuthatch by Inge Curtis Eastern Shore October 13, 2018

VSO VIRGINIA BEACH FIELD TRIP NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 2, 2018

By Lee Adams, Virginia Society of Ornithology

The Virginia Society of Ornithology's annual field trip to Virginia Beach will be Friday, November 30 through Sunday, December 2, 2018. Trips for Friday, November 30, are still being planned. There will be a "Meet and Greet" at 7 pm on Friday night at the hospitality room on the 12th floor of the hotel. Bring a nibble to share and BYOB.

On Saturday, a visit to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT) Island 4, the only island open, is scheduled. Participation will be limited to the first 30 to sign up since there is a requirement to pay a security guard to accompany each group of 15. The fee is \$10 per person for the cost of the security guard. Please bring cash so that the fee can be paid to CBBT Saturday morning. The security information form, which must be filled out by each participant, is available at: www.cbbt.com/forms/2011RevisedRESEARCHERBirdingApp.pdf and must be in hands of Field Trip Coordinator Lee Adams by November 15 as she must deliver them to the CBBT 10 days in advance of our visit.

Please fill out ONLY page 2 which is headed "Each individual in this Group must provide the following information." Email or mail this form to Lee Adams Box 1671 Fredericksburg, VA 22402. Lee will fill out the group information that is requested for page 1.

After leaving the CBBT the group will drive to the Eastern Shore of Virginia and continue to Chincoteague. Sunday morning's destination will be Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach. For additions to the schedule & updates, please check VSO's website: www.virginiabirds.org/

LODGING: A blocks of rooms will be available at Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563). To register for the group rate, you must mention the Virginia Society of Ornithology. Reserve rooms by Nov 16 for the group rate.

Comfort Suites Beachfront (VA563), 2321 Atlantic Avenue Virginia Beach, VA 23451 (757) 491-2400/ FAX (757) 491-8204. Rate is \$74 + tax. www.comfortsuites.com/hotel-virginia_beach-virginia-VA563

TRIP REGISTRATION: It is important to register for the field trips as participation is limited. Register with the trip coordinator, Lee Adams, by email by November 15 at leeloudenslageradams@gmail.com. Please put VSO VIRGINIA BEACH TRIP in the subject line of the email, and include your name, e-mail address & cell phone number, and the field trips you are requesting.

VERY IMPORTANT! All VSO field trips will 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 2019. If two or more people from the same family register, the registration fee will be \$25, which covers a family membership. Groups of students accompanied by their instructor are exempt from this fee. Non-members can join in advance at <http://virginiabirds.net/VSO-Store.html>

OCTOBER & NOVEMBER BIRD WALKS

October's Fourth Saturday Bird Walk will be at New Quarter Park – October 27 – 8 am. Jim Corliss will lead.

November's two Saturday bird walks:

1. The first walk will be **November 10** at the Powhatan Creek Trail – 8 am
2. The second walk will be **November 24**, the Saturday after Thanksgiving, at New Quarter Park – 8 am

Both November walks begin at 8:00 AM and will be led by our own Jan Lockwood. Look for additional information regarding the logistics of each walk a few days in advance.



Yellow-crowned Night Heron at "the dump" on the Eastern Shore. Photo by Inge Curtis Oct 13, 2018



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SUPPORT OUR LOCALLY OWNED BIRD STORES AND 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 10% 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 through donations and a 5% rebate 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

October 27 – 8 am	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg. See page 7
November 4 – 7 am	Hampton Roads Bird Club Bird Walk, Newport News Park. Meet at Ranger Station Parking Lot.
November 8 – 7 pm	Hampton Roads Bird Club monthly meeting at Sandy Bottom Nature Park. “Feeding the Birds” by Teta Kain
November 10 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Powhatan Creek Trail, 3131 Ironbound Rd, Williamsburg. See page 7
November 10	Project FeederWatch Season Starts. See page 5 (https://feederwatch.org/).
November 14 – 7 pm	WBC Monthly Meeting. “Birding and Research Above the Arctic Circle” See page 1
November 18 – 7 am	Hampton Roads Bird Club Bird Walk, Newport News Park. Meet at Ranger Station Parking Lot
November 24 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg, VA. See page 7
December 8 – 8 am	WBC Bird Walk, Chickahominy Riverfront Park, 1350 John Tyler Hwy, Williamsburg, VA
December 16 – all day	Audubon Christmas Bird Count, see page 5.