



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 44 No. 3

www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

March 2020

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl J. Jacobson



Rest in Peace Geoff Giles/Our Friend:

Geoff Giles was a long-time supporter of the WBC. He served as president for three years and field trip chair for three years. He always stood ready to go on a birding adventure and was welcoming to all newbies to the Club and area. We will sorely miss him. On a personal level, it is not easy to move across the United States to a new area as I did when first coming to Williamsburg several years ago. Geoff was immediately welcoming and assisted me in learning the great birding hotspots and birds of the East Coast. One of our friends, Matt Anthony, would call Geoff and say, "There's a rare bird at [a certain location]. Do you want to go?" Geoff would call Mitchell Byrd and me, and sometimes all four of us would take off on a birding adventure. Along the way Matt would be consulting eBird on his phone and we would keep going, sometimes past dark. I counted Geoff as a great friend! One time Matt called about a Long-billed Curlew. Although I couldn't join them that day, I went the following week and thanks to Geoff and Matt saw these beautiful birds (see Matt's photo, Page 7) that I hadn't seen since leaving California. Geoff was one of my BBBs (Best Birding Buddies).

Matt Anthony wrote this wonderful memorial to Geoff:

I started birding in 2003, when I was just twelve years old. What at first seemed like just another merit badge to earn at Boy Scout camp became the foundation of a lifelong passion. This summer will mark 17 years since I first took up my binoculars, and while in many ways that isn't very much time, so much has changed. When I started birding there was no eBird, social media barely existed, and even email and listservs were still a relative novelty. For birders just a few years younger, the technological revolution completely transformed the process for learning the ropes, but when I started, the local bird club was absolutely essential for connecting with mentors who could pass on their knowledge about

(Continued on Page 2, right column)

PROGRAMS

[Andrews Hall, Room 101, College of William and Mary](#), 7 pm.
Download W&M parking permit for use during meetings here:
<https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/wp-content/uploads/ParkingPass2019-20.pdf>

March 18: Presentation by Mike Bishop, founder and director of the Northern Virginia Purple Martin Initiative, a grass roots effort to provide housing for all native cavity nesting birds at no cost on public lands. Some of the birds the initiative is attempting to help include Purple Martin, woodpeckers, Chimney Swift, Great Crested Flycatcher, titmouse, chickadees, wrens, bluebirds, and Tree Swallow. Founded in 2015, the initiative has been successful in bolstering the numbers of selected cavity nesting birds by installing housing in the proper habitat with monitoring by trained volunteers.

April 15: Research presentations by three College of William and Mary students working with Dr. Daniel Cristol. The work of these students has been partially funded by ornithology research grants from the WBC.

FIELD TRIPS

March 21: Chippokes Plantation State Park in Surry County. See Page 3 for more information.

May 16 – 17: "Warbler Road" in Botetourt County. Area known for its abundance of warblers, both nesting locally and passing through on migration. See Page 3 for more information.

BIRD WALKS

March 14: Kittiewan Plantation, Charles City County

March 28: New Quarter Park, York County

April 11: Freedom Park, James City County

WBC EXECUTIVE BOARD 2020

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Liaison to CVWO Nancy Barnhart	540-454-3014 barnhartnt@gmail.com

President's Corner (Continued)

when, where, and how to bird. I was fortunate to benefit from several such people in the local bird club where I grew up in Maryland.

By the time I came to Williamsburg in 2014 and met Geoff Giles, I had been birding for over a decade. Geoff was not mentor to me in quite the same way, yet I think that he embodied all of the very best qualities of those early bird club mentors. To say Geoff was welcoming is an understatement; he was always ready to invite anyone and everyone to share his passion for birding, attend trips and club meetings, and become a part of the Williamsburg birding community. For me, a recent transplant to Williamsburg with tons of birding enthusiasm but a graduate student's income and a car that always seemed one long birding trip away from death, Geoff was someone who was willing to bring me along for the ride (literally), offering up his vehicle, his time, his knowledge of the local birding spots, and even subsidizing the occasional meal. We shared a great many birding adventures together, and he really helped make me feel like part of a community in my new home. I know that he made a similar effort to include other William & Mary birders. In the course of only a few years we birded far and wide, and Geoff introduced me to tons of hotspots around the state, places that I still love visiting, like Shirley Plantation, The Pocket, and Messick Point. We birded together from the Shenandoah Valley to the Eastern Shore and everywhere in between, and even ventured by boat into the Barrier Island marshes in search of Long-billed Curlews. While birding was where he hung his hat, I will also remember Geoff's uncanny ability to find the best lunch spot no matter where we were! For the regrettably brief time that I knew him, Geoff was a welcoming presence, a wonderful companion, and a great friend who truly made me feel like a member of the Williamsburg birding community. I will miss him dearly.

Please see Page 7 for a memorial to Geoff through photos that I put together with the help of others.

Welcome to the VSO 2020 Annual Meeting May 1-3/Volunteers Needed to Staff our WBC Table:

I hope you have saved the dates and plan to attend the Virginia Society of Ornithology 2020 Annual Meeting in Williamsburg, May 1-3. You do not have to be a VSO member to attend, and this is a great opportunity since the meeting is being held in our community and sponsored by our Club. Dr. Bryan Watts will be the Keynote Speaker. (Continued on



Dr. Watts banding shorebirds

Page 4, left column)

UPCOMING FIELD TRIP TO CHIPPOKES PLANTATION STATE PARK, MARCH 21

By George Martin

The Club's March field trip will be on Saturday, March 21, 2020 to Chippokes Plantation State Park in Surry County. Nick Newberry will lead us on the trails in the park. According to the eBird database, there should still be ducks in the James River. In the forest, winter residents should still be present, and we might get to see some early migrants. Spotting scopes should be helpful for viewing birds along the river.

For those who want to carpool, let's meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center on Jamestown Road at 7:00 AM for a departure time of 7:10 AM sharp. I expect we'll arrive at the park around 8:00 AM.

For those who wish to drive themselves, the destination address is 695 Chippokes Park Road, Surry, VA 23883. The admission fee to the state park is \$7. I encourage those with annual state park passes to drive. 🐦

PLANNED FIELD TRIP TO WARBLER ROAD ON MAY 16 AND 17

By George Martin

The Club is planning a multi-day field trip to Warbler Road for birding Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17, 2020. "Warbler Road" is a section of state roads west of the Blue Ridge Parkway in Botetourt County, northwest of Lynchburg. It is renowned for the abundance of warblers, both nesting locally and passing through on migration, many of which are much less common in the Tidewater area. Andy Hawkins will be leading a group from the Club along the stretch of roads on both days. The area is about 3 ½ hours by car from Williamsburg, so those interested in birding Saturday morning will likely leave Williamsburg Friday afternoon. Lodging options are still being developed. If you're interested in participating, please contact George Martin at grm0803@gmail.com (if you haven't done so already) for further information. 🐦

WBC MEMBERSHIP

A warm welcome is extended to new members Henry and Jenny Jordan, Michael Kendrick, Bob Leek, and Deanna Rote. Current members, if you have not already renewed for 2020 you can find a membership form on Page 9 of this newsletter. 🐦



Cooper's Hawk feeding from the carcass of a duck at Dutch Gap. Photo by Rose Ryan.

DUCKS AND SNIPES AT DUTCH GAP

By George Martin

Ten birders enjoyed a crisp winter day at Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Henrico County on Saturday, February 15, 2020. Ducks were the order of the day and, despite the subfreezing temperatures early that morning, they didn't disappoint. There were ten species of ducks spotted, including one deceased duck being devoured by a Cooper's Hawk. The many Wilson's Snipe amused the group, first finding the snipes in reeds the same color as the birds, then watching them bounce while they fed. In all, 53 species were identified. 🐦



WBC Members on Dutch Gap Field Trip. From left: Jan Lockwood, Diane Battersby, Barbara Giffin, Paula Perdoni, Nancy Barnhart, George Martin, Shirley Devan, Rich Lowry, Joyce Lowry, and Rose Ryan.

President's Corner (Continued)

(Please see the awesome photos he provided). His topic is *Tracking Whimbrels: Exploring the Secret Life and Shifting Challenges of a Migrant Shorebird*.



Dr. Bryan Watts with third-year male Bald Eagle.

Please volunteer to help out with the Williamsburg Bird Club exhibit tables at the VSO Annual Meeting and present a welcoming smile. We will set up the tables on Friday, May 1 around 1:00 PM. People will be coming in to register, so the tables need to be manned that afternoon and also that evening when the cocktail hour is scheduled in the same room. We also need volunteers for Saturday afternoon, May 2 leading up to the banquet. Email me at icheryljoy@aol.com if you can volunteer.

Super Bowl Winners:



How quickly this year is flying by, much like this Red-headed Woodpecker photographed by Parameswaran Ponnudurai and used with his permission. For those of

you whose team did not win the Super Bowl, there is still good news. I was pleasantly surprised to hear that this year's Super Bowl in Miami—and stadium events in general—are making strides in being green by acting as test beds for the zero-waste movement. As *National Geographic's* [Sarah Gibbens reported](#), the average Super Bowl game generates about 80,000 pounds of consumer waste, a lot of which is plastic. But this year's big game replaced plastic cups with aluminum, which is easier to recycle, and it also replaced most plastic cutlery and straws with compostable options. In addition to limiting plastic trash, this year's event donated leftover food, recovered kitchen oil for biofuel, and used energy-

efficient lighting, among other green measures. No matter what team you liked, or if you only watched for the commercials, we were all winners.

More Good News/A Global Issue:

The Cerulean Warbler has been reclassified from Vulnerable to Near Threatened. It is possible the slowing decline is the result of improved protection and slowing rates of loss of mature deciduous forests in the core breeding range in the Appalachian Mountains of the eastern U.S. However, another possible explanation for the apparent slowed decline could be a correction in our understanding of the numbers behind the trends due to new methods of analysis.

The Cerulean Warbler remains a top priority on the watch list because it is rare and still declining. The Birds Canada community is at the forefront of the response. Ian Fife and Liz Purves recently reported on new funding for Cerulean Warbler conservation in largely unprotected Frontenac and Carolinian forest areas in southern Ontario, building on years of work implementing best practice guidelines with woodlot owners. In addition to increasing beneficial stewardship for the species, this work will give us a clearer idea of the number of Cerulean Warblers in Canada, and how much suitable habitat is occupied. You can help by purchasing certified bird-friendly coffee, which supports habitat stewardship where the Cerulean Warbler overwinters. Read more at <https://www.birdscanada.org/news/2019-red-list-update-a-canadian-perspective-on-the-global-report-card>.

Much Work To Be Done:

I've tried to include some good news but we all know that other news exists and we must continue to be active and be the voice for the birds we love. Exxon killed 250,000 seabirds in its 1989 oil spill off of Alaska; it paid \$112 million for the wildlife and environmental damage. BP killed a million birds in its Gulf of Mexico disaster; it paid \$100 million, also in part under a 1918 treaty to protect migratory birds. Last week, the U.S. government said it would make official a policy of no longer prosecuting companies that accidentally kill birds. What does that mean? "In most cases, especially if there's money involved, people are going to ignore the birds," Noah Greenwald, of the nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity, told Haley Cohen Gilliland of *National Geographic*. Read more about changes to the implementation of the Migratory Bird *(Continued on Page 5, Left Column)*

President's Corner (Continued)

Treaty Act at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/Animals/2020/02/accidental-bird-deaths-law/>

.Retweeting, So To Speak:

I end with some fun information about a species we all know, the chickadees. Yes, chickadees amplify the alarm calls of others, but a new study says they are careful not to vocalize more specific information about the predator until they can verify it. The warning mobilizes other birds to jump out en masse and harass a potential predator, writes Brian Gutierrez for *National Geographic*. The word "chickadee" itself comes from the warning sound the bird gives out when a predator is nearby—*Chickadee-dee-dee-dee-dee*. The more "dees," the more dangerous the predator.

And finally, forgive me for taking liberty with Thoreau's quote and call this ...

The Living Spirit of a Bird/Living Things:

The power of a tree: "I have been into the lumber-yard, and the carpenter's shop, and the tannery, and the lampblack factory, and the turpentine clearing; but when at length I saw the tops of the pines waving and reflecting the light at a distance high over all the rest of the forest, I realized that the former were not the highest use of the pine. It is not their bones or hide or tallow that I love most. It is the living spirit of the tree, not its spirit of turpentine, with which I sympathize, and which heals my cuts. It is as immortal as I am, and perchance will go to as high a heaven, there to tower above me still."

—Henry David Thoreau, from his diaries 🐦

WATERBIRD "WALK" ALONG THE COLONIAL PARKWAY

By Shirley Devan

Twelve birders joined me as we caravanned down the Colonial Parkway between Williamsburg and Yorktown for the regular Second Saturday bird "walk" on February 8, 2020. We stopped at three pullouts before we parked at Yorktown Beach and walked up to the Coleman Bridge. We basked in sunny skies and very light breezes with temperatures ranging from about 34 to 44.

We had a very successful day at each of our stops: Felgates Creek, 18 species; Indian Field Creek, 12 species; Fusiliers Redoubt Overlook, 14 species, and Yorktown Beach, 17 species. Everyone got good looks at Buffleheads, Tundra Swans, Hooded Mergansers, Horned Grebes, Common Loons (one

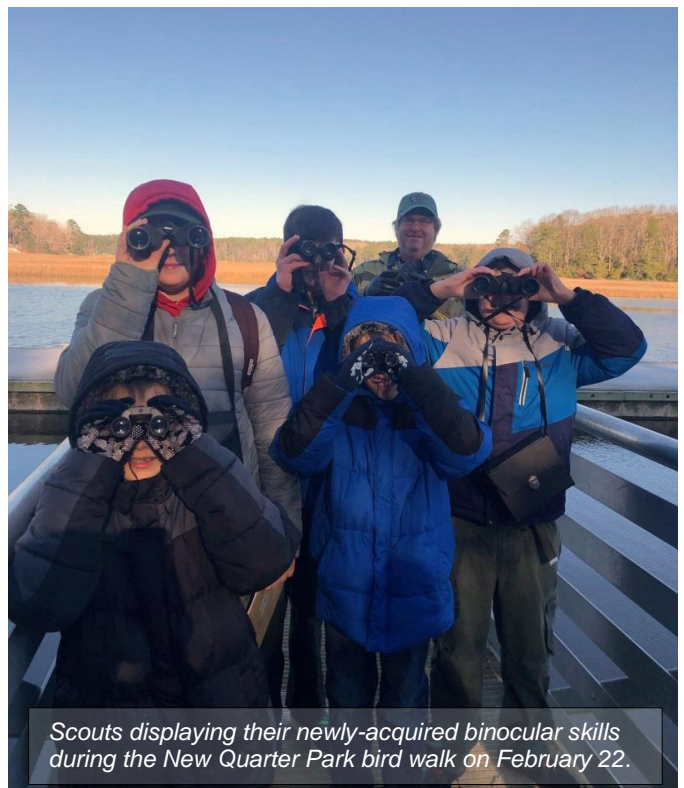
close in at the beach), Northern Gannet at the beach, and Brown Pelicans at two locations.

The bird of the day was a Clapper Rail at Felgates Creek that, without a sound, lifted up out of the narrow strip of marsh on the river near the parking lot, flew about 50 feet, and then landed. No time for pictures — just OMGs! The non-bird of the day was a Canvasback. After almost everyone looked at it through multiple scopes as it bobbed up and down in the river near the far shore under the Coleman Bridge, we all agreed it was a DECOY! Oh well... 🐦

SCOUTING NEW QUARTER PARK

By Scott Hemler and Jan Lockwood

During WBC's Fourth Saturday bird walk at New Quarter Park on February 22, 2020, Scott took a group of Boy Scouts from New Kent County along the trails and educated them about our local birds, the art of finding birds, and the use of binoculars. At the same time, Jan took four others along our Club's regular route. It was a very cold morning, but the sun was bright, warming both birds and birders. The kids enjoyed the event, and two adults who had never visited the park before loved the views of Queens Creek and the woods. Overall, it was a quiet morning for birds, but the groups sighted 18 species and took pleasure in seeing boisterous woodpecker activity and Tufted Titmouse and Yellow-rumped Warblers foraging in the sun. 🐦



Scouts displaying their newly-acquired binocular skills during the New Quarter Park bird walk on February 22.

KESTREL & PILEATED WOODPECKER & OPOSSUM...OH MY!

by Cathy Millar

One hundred ten folks filled Andrews Hall for our joint Williamsburg Bird Club and Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists meeting on February 19, 2020. Anticipation filled the air as big and small animal carriers were brought in. We had come to learn about the nonprofit organization AWARE (Alliance of Wildlife Animal Rehabilitators and Educators). Deb Woodward, certified rehabilitator (also WBC member and VA Master Naturalist), and Colleen Harlow, AWARE treasurer, education director, and rehabilitator, described that their mission was to rehabilitate and provide sanctuary and individualized care for Virginia's native wildlife with the intent to release in accordance with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries guidelines. The animals that can't be released become education animals. Deb has six acres at her home in New Kent County where she rehabilitated over 80 animals during her first year.



American Kestrel.
Photo by Keith Kennedy.

A shrill, high call was heard from the first animal ambassador before she was even brought to view: a five-year-old American Kestrel named Anita who'd had a

deformity of her beak as a youngster that has since healed. We were told that young raptors that are going to be released have to graduate from "mouse school" to prove they can provide for themselves. Other animal ambassadors were: Zoe, a Red-shouldered Hawk who was called Zeus until eggs were unexpectedly laid; Woody, a Pileated Woodpecker, who noisily hammered away at everything in his cage even when not being featured, insists on being hand fed, and enjoys the luxury of bathing in the rehabilitator's bathtub; Chloe, a beautiful red morph Eastern Screech-Owl; and Hershey, a Barred Owl. Many of these birds could not be released due to having been hit by vehicles that caused neurological damage, loss of an eye, or compound wing fractures. We were reminded not to throw biodegradables such as apple cores and banana peels out of car windows as these foods lure rodents to the edge of the road, and an owl or raptor focused intently on swooping down on these rodents is vulnerable to being hit by a vehicle.



Eastern Screech-Owl. Photo by Keith Kennedy.

Josie, apprentice rehabilitator and the daughter of the WBC vice-president for programs, Dean Shostak, brought out the last guest: an adorable opossum who'd been orphaned. Her litter mates were successfully released into the wild, but she had refused to leave her sanctuary and

looked very contented wrapped in a blanket in Josie's arms.

Each animal was brought around the entire assembly for folks to enjoy a close look and take photos. We were all so impressed by the enthusiasm and passion that exuded from these dedicated rehabilitators. For more information about AWARE visit their website: <https://awarewildanimals.squarespace.com/> As a nonprofit organization, donations are always most welcome. 🐦

FORMER WBC TREASURER CHUCK REND

By Shirley Devan



Our Club treasurer from 1994 to 2011, Charles ("Chuck") A. Rend, died February 11, 2020. Chuck was 81.

Over Chuck's years on the job, the role of treasurer increased in responsibility. Membership duties multiplied and required additional record keeping for the treasurer. Chuck made sure Jeanette Navia, membership chair, and Fred Blystone, newsletter editor, received information on every member, including email addresses (not an issue in 1994!). Chuck administered the Nature Camp Scholarships in the early years in addition to the ornithology research grants for W&M graduate students. He deftly managed the Club's funds during the stock market crash in 2008. Meanwhile, he regularly checked the mail at the post office box and carried on the regular financial duties of the treasurer while he had a full-time job – as a practicing physician traveling to the Peninsula every day. We remember Chuck as a loyal steward of the Club's funds. He always had the Club's best interests at heart – financial and otherwise. Thank you, Chuck. 🐦



Remembering Geoffrey Novash Giles

May 25, 1945 – February 6, 2020



1. Geoff was the WBC field trip coordinator for three years and organized some great trips. One trip was to Maryland where this photo was taken of Geoff with a statue of a giant Red Knot. (Photo by Cathy Millar) 2. Geoff with bobwhites on his arm, taken at Turner Wildlife Sculpture Studio. WBC toured the workshop, where there were a couple of orphaned bobwhites who had grown up in the studio. (Photo by C. Millar) 3. Geoff found joy in all living things. Geoff with a daddy longlegs. (Photo by Jeanette Navia) 4. Geoff enjoyed people and always took time to talk with everyone. He knew no stranger. Geoff and Bob Long. (Photo by J. Navia) 5. Geoff loved teaching about birds and knew the next generation is the key to our future. He was always ready to volunteer. Here he is with Scouts. (Photo by J. Navia) 6. From Matt Anthony: "When I called Geoff to ask if he wanted to join me on a boat trip out to the barrier islands to look for Long-billed Curlews, I believe his response was "would I ever!" I will always remember his excitement when we finally found them, and I'm glad I got to share this spectacular life bird with him. 02-28-2016." (Photo by M. Anthony)

REPORTED BIRD SIGHTINGS

We want to know what you're seeing in your yard and travels. Please share with Club members by sending your sightings and photos to Mary Ellen Hodges at me.hodges@cox.net.

Tom McCary: "I enjoyed reading about Cheryl's theme bird [in the January 2020 issue of *The Flyer*]. When I awoke on 1 January, I heard cawing and later observed a small flock of **American Crows**. I recalled



the poem by Robert Frost in which a crow shakes down on him the dust of snow from a hemlock. The experience lifted the poet's spirits and "changed some part of a day I had rued." Snow? A hemlock? A

crow? Indeed, Frost was transformed. For me, likewise, my theme bird the crow brought joy."

Jeanne Millin: "On a Road Scholar birding trip to Southeastern Arizona during the week of February 16th, Mike Millin and I managed to visit my 48th state. It was slightly early for some of the hummingbirds but not for the raptors and woodpeckers.

Our group of 14, plus two experienced guides, spent 5 days and saw 114 different species. Some of them Life Birds (for Jeanne; Mike does not keep a list). This area of Arizona has both high desert and the snow-covered Huachuca Mountains producing a variety of species. The estimate on our first day at Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area was up to 5,000 migrating **Sandhill Cranes**.



Sandhill Cranes at Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area in Arizona. Photo by Mike Millin.

We also saw **Mexican Ducks** and **Mexican Jays** on that day. Four **woodpeckers** (**Acorn, Gila, Ladder-**



backed, and Arizona), Gambel's Quail, and a Harris's Hawk, were among the new birds to us. Two that remain are hard to pronounce: **Phainopepla (a silky-flycatcher), and **Pyrrhuloxia** (in the**

Cardinalidae family). My favorite bird of the week, however, was the **Greater Roadrunner**. Its call is not 'beep, beep' but a series of 'dove like notes descending in pitch.' " 🐦



Mexican Jay (embedded in paragraph above) and Pyrrhuloxias (immediately above) photographed recently in Arizona by Mike Millin.

CALENDAR

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| MARCH 14 | Bird Walk, Kittiewan Plantation, Charles City County |
| MARCH 18 | Membership Meeting and Program from the Northern Virginia Purple Martin Initiative |
| MARCH 21 | Field Trip, Chippokes Plantation State Park, Surry County |
| MARCH 28 | Bird Walk, New Quarter Park |
| APRIL 11 | Bird Walk, Freedom Park |
| APRIL 13 | WBC Board Meeting |
| APRIL 15 | Membership Meeting and Program from W&M recipients of WBC research grants |
| MAY 1-3 | VSO Annual Meeting, Williamsburg |
| MAY 16/17 | Field Trip, "Warbler Road," Botetourt County |



2020 Williamsburg Bird Club Membership Form

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email	Phone	

_____ Please send me the full color version of the newsletter by email at my email address above.

_____ Please mail the black-and-white hard copy version of the newsletter to my home address above.

Membership _____ New _____ Renewing

_____ Individual \$20

_____ Family \$25

_____ Patron \$35

_____ Student \$5

I wish to make a contribution to:

\$_____ the Ruth Beck & Bill Sheehan Ornithological Research Grants Fund for W&M Students

\$_____ the Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarship Fund

\$_____ the Child Development Resources Seed/Feeder Fund

Make your check payable to the Williamsburg Bird Club and mail to:

Williamsburg Bird Club
P.O. Box 1085
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Your membership dues and additional contributions are important to the mission of the Williamsburg Bird Club. Thank you!

If you have questions about your membership, contact Membership Chair Jeanette Navia,
jnavia@gmail.com

The Williamsburg Bird Club is exempt from federal income tax under 26 U.S.C. Section 501(c)(3) and is a non-profit organization eligible to receive tax deductible donations.

A financial statement is available on request from the VA Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs



Williamsburg Bird Club
PO Box 1085
Williamsburg, VA 23187

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 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 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/>