



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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October 2021

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Cheryl J. Jacobson



Welcome to fall! Fall migration is under way and with our Bird Walks and Field Trips, our club has provided some great opportunities for you to see our migrant birds. Fall migration is much more drawn out than spring migration, with the peak generally recognized as mid-August to mid-October for most of North America.

Great information about fall migration and what you can do to help birds can be found at: [Fall Migrations Begin! | Audubon Rockies](#). Although this article is on the Audubon Rockies site, the information is relevant to all areas. In North America, seven out of ten bird species migrate, "partaking in epic and often perilous feats of endurance, twice per year, purely for reasons of survival." As stated in the article: "New seasonal ranges provide conducive temperatures, more food resources, and breeding opportunities that increase the chances of healthy, viable offspring. Among the gold medal winners of migrating birds is the Arctic Tern. Taking part in the longest migration known in the animal kingdom, this tern travels 55,923 miles every year, literally from pole to pole!"

One simple thing we can do to help birds survive the challenges of migration is to turn off outside lights. "The vast majority (80%) of birds in North America migrate at night. Artificial light pollution can attract, confuse, and disorient them. Already strained by long journeys, artificial lights and skyglow can lead to the death of many birds." According to another Audubon article ([Lights Out | Audubon](#)): "While lights can throw birds off their migration paths, bird fatalities are more directly caused by the amount of energy the birds waste flying around and calling out in confusion. The exhaustion can then leave them vulnerable to other urban threats and deplete their energy needed for surviving migration and producing chicks in subsequent breeding seasons." (Continued on Page 2)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

By Tory Gussman

October 20, 7:00 pm (via Zoom): Brent Lubbock, Sylvan Heights Bird Park.

WBC's October 20 program offers an armchair tour of the Sylvan Heights Bird Park in Scotland Neck, North Carolina. Brent Lubbock, Director of Operations and Development, will describe past and present avian conservation projects and give information about the park's Avian Breeding Center.



Hamerkop ([Scopus umbretta](#)). Photographed by Judy Jones at Sylvan Heights Bird Park.

Looking Ahead: On **November 17**, **Bob Schamerhorn** will present a program on **Attracting Birds with Water**. Join us for great photos and tips on how to enhance your backyard birding. 🐦

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There is reason for hope

I recently read an article on the BirdLife website titled [What gives you hope for the future?](#) The author, Jeremy Herry, expressed some of my feelings about migration, conservation, and feeling **hopeful** in this time of challenge when, in face of "a disappointing political decision, a species in decline or an extreme weather event," "the struggle to protect nature can be disheartening." But we cannot give up. "And we cannot forget that there is reason for hope! We all need to understand that the world can change for the better, and that despite the destruction, **as long as there's a bird out there singing, that bird needs protection!**"

Despite all the damage done to the Earth, these amazing birds show resilience and persistence. True, there are declines and changes. However, there are still migration spectacles to be seen, reminding us that when we give nature the chance, by habitat protection and restoration of lost systems, birds bounce back. —Dr. Yoav Perlman, Science Director, Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel/BirdLife Israel.

Conservation Committee

As a WBC member, you can be part of hope through conservation. The Conservation Committee will continue in WBC efforts to assist bird species that are considered species of concern as identified by [Partners in Flight](#) (PIF) as well as those identified by the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#). The primary purpose of the PIF Watch List is to foster proactive attention to the conservation needs of the continent's most vulnerable land bird species.

The Conservation Committee will utilize donated funds for materials and equipment in order to support the establishment and maintenance of Purple Martin Colonies and assist in preserving other bird species of population concern, such as Chimney Swifts. When you pay your 2022 WBC dues you will be provided the opportunity to make an additional donation to the Conservation Committee.

Why Conservation?

The purpose of the WBC is to promote interest in the study of wild birds; protect birds and their habitats; and share the joy of birding with others. In the on-going effort to achieve these goals, the Board recently established a Conservation Committee. The com-
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President's Corner, Continued from Page 2

mittee will assist the Club by focusing on conservation through legislation, both locally and nationally, and through species preservation and restoration.

Two examples of past WBC conservation efforts have been letter writing and one-on-one contact with legislators in support of the Migratory Bird Protection Act and support of efforts to ensure the long-term viability of the bird colony that until recently was using the South Island of the Hampton Road Bridge-Tunnel as a nesting spot. An example of species preservation is the establishment of Purple Martin Colonies at York River State Park, New Quarter Park, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and Chickahominy Riverfront Park.

Your support of the committee will assure continued support of conservation activities.

I will end with this story of hope and a photo from Jeremy Herry's [article](#) that I found very touching:

My aunt died last year. At her online funeral, I learnt that before her illness, she had befriended a blackbird that came to perch on

her hand each morning in the garden. Shortly before she died, she went to the garden to say goodbye and thanks to her feathered companion. Nature is a vital source of comfort and wonder; we cannot give up on it! —David Howell, Climate and Energy Advisor, Sociedad Española de Ornitología (Spanish Ornithological Society)/BirdLife Spain. 🐦



Eurasian Blackbird (Turdus merulus). Photo by Nicklas Hamann.

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER BIRD WALKS

By Scott Hemler

We had around 15 people come out to New Quarter Park on a beautiful Saturday morning, September 25, for our monthly bird walk! While there was not a large number of species found, we did have some great sightings. The best was a very cooperative Clapper Rail along the marsh shoreline! We got a great look at it for quite a long time and some great photos were taken. Clapper Rails are fairly secretive birds, so this was a rare treat! We also saw three Great Egrets and two Bald Eagles. And we saw a Summer Tanager, a Yellow-Billed Cuckoo, and a Northern Parula that were probably stopping by the park for a rest and something to eat as they continue their migration south. Participants in the walk were George Martin (walk leader), Melissa Martin, Jan Lockwood, Diana Burson, Paula Perdoni, Meg and Steve Weber, Jim and Sheila Maynihan, Barbara Smith, Letitia Lussiee, Joe Jones, Joey Di Liberto, and Bob and Anne Marie Wojtal.

The October Bird Walk at New Quarter Park will take place on Saturday, October 30, at 8:00 am. Our walk is usually scheduled for the fourth Saturday of each month, but the park is hosting a 5K race that

day in October so we have moved the October walk to the fifth Saturday. 🐦



Clapper Rail. Photo by Paula Perdoni during the September 25 Bird Walk.



The happy group of birders on the WBC walk, September 25, at New Quarter Park. Photo by Scott Hemler.

FIELD TRIP REPORT

By George Martin

Saturday, September 18 – Newport News Park

The Club kicked off the 2021-22 field trip season with a walk at Newport News Park on Saturday, September 18. While migrants were light, the three birders joining leader Jason Strickland identified 42 species. The group got good looks at Northern Parulas, Black-and-White Warblers, and American Redstarts. An empid with buffy wing bars and a prominent eye ring stumped the group for a while. As usual, the genus is tough to see and tough to photograph (although see photo by Nancy Barnhart), but the group eventually concluded that the bird was a fall Acadian Flycatcher. And it was a five-woodpecker day! The eBird list is at the following link:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S94826527>



Acadian Flycatcher. Photo by Nancy Barnhart at Newport News Park, September 18.

Upcoming: Saturday, October 16 – Eastern Shore

On Saturday, October 16, Club members are invited to bird the Eastern Shore of Virginia, where Matt Anthony will lead us. Current plans are to bird at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel [Scenic Overview](#), the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge ([ESVANWR](#)), and Kiptopeke State Park's [Hawkwatch Platform](#). Other sites may also get on the agenda, especially if unusual species are known to be in the area.

Note that E-ZPass tolls on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel are \$20 round trip. Prices are higher without an E-ZPass ([link to Toll Schedule](#)).

Those interested in carpooling should meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center at 7:15 a.m. Drivers may dictate conditions for their passengers: vaccination status, masking, etc. The first stop will be the Overview. It's a short drive from there to the ESVANWR Visitor Center, where we'll meet Matt at 9 a.m. Brian Taber, president of Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, has been alerted to expect a group at the Kiptopeke Hawkwatch site later in the morning. And since the hawkwatch is in a state park, those who have passes should bring them. Without a park pass, admission is \$7 per vehicle. I expect we'll be hungry after all that birding, so I suggest gathering for lunch at the Cape Charles Brewing Company.



EASTERN BLACK RAIL CONSERVATION


By Cathy Millar

At our meeting on September 15, we learned from Bryan Watts, Director of the Center for Conservation Biology (CCB) and Mitchell A Byrd Research Professor at W&M, about what he described as one of the most challenging species the CCB has worked with: the Eastern Black Rail. A small ground-nester measuring only 4-6 inches in length, it is one of the most secretive species in North America. It inhabits areas of dense reedy vegetation, making the birds very hard to see and collect data regarding their status and distribution. In 2008, Dr. Watts and the CCB established the Eastern Black Rail Working Group to produce a status assessment and conservation action plan. Extensive studies revealed that the Black Rail may be the most endangered bird species along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts of North America, and in 2020 it was listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Their decline is primarily due to three types of habitat loss: (1) wetland reclamation for development beginning in the late 1800s, leading to hundreds of thousands of acres of marsh being lost; (2) marsh modification programs starting in the 1930s to reduce the population of mosquitos by digging drainage ditches; and (3) more recently, and the current leading cause of habitat loss, sea level rise.

Black rails are found in five types of habitats: wet grassy fields, freshwater wetlands, impoundments, coastal prairies, and their often-preferred habitat of a narrow band just above high tide in salt marshes. They require a water depth of about one inch and, being a ground nester, are not very tolerant of more or less water. Historically, their breeding range reached as far north as the Newbury Marshes in Massachusetts, but in just the last few years their northern range has contracted all the way down to South Carolina. The last record of one in Virginia was that of the call of a male on Craney Island heard

by Bill Williams in 2017. Since the 1990s, there have not been enough young rails produced to offset adult mortality. Currently, there is a race to slow the free fall decline of Black Rails by creating/managing suitable habitat. Because of the inability to control sea level rise squeezing the Black Rail out of tidal marsh habitats, conservation efforts are currently focused in the vast non-tidal wetlands of South Florida where there remains the largest population of an estimated 200 Black Rails. Measures that can be implemented to enhance existing habitats and create new ones that mimic existing successful nesting sites and are dependable for supporting a breeding population include providing a diverse topographical surface with variation of water depth and soil moisture; using prescribed fire to control woody growth; working with farmers to manage grazing cattle herds; and adding water to a site if too dry. Currently, Dr. Watts and his team are looking for places in Central Florida to test these management practices.

Dr. Watts concluded his presentation by noting that we have come a long way in the last decade in understanding the distribution and needs of the Black Rail but have a long way to go in understanding how to implement management on the ground and successfully bring the species back from the brink of extinction. It is hoped that if efforts are successful in Florida, the same methods can be used for reestablishing the Black Rail northward to its historic range, although Dr. Watts thought that moving birds from Florida to established breeding grounds would also be required.

A portion of your WBC dues supports the club's annual donation of \$500 to the Center for Conservation Biology and their remarkable conservation efforts. A video recording of Dr. Watt's presentation will be available on Zoom through October 15. Use Passcode K%1K62?I at the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/K1X1-enPp4o2stToymYDZCnjAYIzgOemX2YePEiDlcTGoGGjTa25DBSRH4MsXB0-.QJNbzo73MvADCbCk> 

2021 NATURE CAMP SCHOLARSHIPS — ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT ITS BEST

In early September, Lee Schuster heard from the two recipients of the WBC's Nature Camp scholarships this year. Each young woman extended her thanks for the club's financial support. Zoey Young, who received the Millin Scholarship, and Callie Morris, who received the Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarship, shared a PowerPoint presentation and a letter, respectively, describing their camp experiences. Both young women had been awarded scholarships for the 2020 camp season, which ultimately was canceled due to COVID-19. A third student receiving a

2020 scholarship was unable to attend camp this summer.

Zoey Young had attended Nature Camp before, but our scholarship allowed her to attend for one more summer before leaving for college this fall. She has a keen interest in environmental issues and was recognized as Best All-Round Camper in her session. For her "major" class in camp this year, Zoey chose *(Continued on Page 6)*

Nature Camp, Continued from Page 5)

Environmental Philosophy, which examined environmental justice among other issues. In her Power-Point she wrote: "This class gave me a new understanding of not only environmental topics themselves, but also the perspectives people come into these conversations with, and from now on, I can keep that in mind in every conversation I hold." Zoey also noted that she is "interested in a career in something like teaching or writing, either way, that gives me a chance to spread awareness and knowledge about [environmental] topics, environmental history and conservation."

Callie Morris is presently a freshman in high school and was attending Nature Camp for the first time this summer. She says she had a "wonderful time" and "would definitely love to go back in the following years." Below is the full text of the letter Callie wrote about Nature Camp:

My Nature Camp Experience

To begin, I'll start by saying that my overall time spent at Nature Camp was unforgettable. I was able to learn such a mass amount of information in such a short time. The atmosphere set in place at camp is such a friendly, welcoming kind. During camp, I made many new friends with similar interests to my own, that I still keep in touch with. When I first arrived at camp, I was a bit nervous because it was my first year going, but I soon learned how exciting and fun Nature Camp is.

A major takeaway from camp for myself was the new perspective I have on conservation. While at camp, I was able to learn to conserve materials, energy, and natural resources. Now that I'm back at home, I have since integrated such skills into my day-to-day life. Being at camp showed me a prime example of what proper conservation is. I now know a greater sense of urgency

when it comes to the things we can do to protect our planet, and I am so very thankful for that. Something I loved at camp were the classes. I got to learn such diverse things from Astronomy to Zoology. My personal favorite class was Mycology, which ended up being my major. Mycology is the study of mushrooms, and even before camp, I had loved mushrooms. While in class I got to learn about how very diverse mushrooms and fungi can be. An amazing thing about Nature Camp is how hands-on it is. And when it came to Mycology, we had a great time finding and identifying different fungi. During my major class, we made kits that can grow chicken of the woods, a type of edible mushroom, and we got to take them home to grow and then cook. Something I found fascinating about Mycology is its vast uses involving fungi. It can range from cleaning up oil spills to making cancer-curing medicines. So overall, mushrooms can do insanely cool things.

The sense of community is so fantastic at camp. You really get to be surrounded by kind, fun people. The staff and counselors really make the camp what it is. They were able to teach us so much, yet still, were super fun to be around. I really thought every counselor was fantastic. I never felt out of place at camp, because there was always a great member of the staff to hang out with or fellow campers. Although it was my first year, I found it extremely inclusive to everyone who came.

To conclude, I had a spectacular time at Nature Camp. I would most definitely like to go back next year, and hope to learn much more! Everything about camp is fantastic in my opinion, and if given the chance I would send everyone I know to camp, so they too can understand how amazing it was. I am so thankful for the experiences I had, and the friends I made. And I am especially grateful for my scholarship provided by the Williamsburg Bird Club, that allowed me to experience such great things.
—Callie Morris 🐦

FRESH LIBRARY BOOKS — GET 'EM WHILE THEY'RE HOT!

By Lee Schuster

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

- American Museum of Natural History: Birds of North America (DK Publishing)
- The Backyard Birdsong Guide (Donald Kroodsmma)

- Bedside Book of Birds: An Avian Miscellany (Graeme Gibson)
- Birds of North America: Eastern Region (Francois Vuilleumier)
- Birds of North America: Western Region (Francois Vuilleumier)
- Bird Songs: 250 North American Birds in Song (Les Beletsky) (Continued on Page 7)

Library Books, Continued from Page 6

- Field Guide to Songbirds of North America: A Visual Directory of 100 of the Most Popular Songbirds (Noble S. Proctor)
- How to Attract Birds to Your Garden: Foods They Like, Plants They Love, Shelter They Need (Dan Rouse)
- Hummingbird Handbook: Everything You Need to Know About These Fascinating Birds (John Shewey)

- Most Remarkable Creature: The Hidden Life and Epic Journey of the World's Smartest Birds of Prey (Jonathan Meiburg)
- Owls of the Eastern Ice (Jonathan Slaght)
- Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America (Roger Tory Peterson)
- Why Peacocks? An Unlikely Search for Meaning in the World's Most Magnificent Bird (Sean Flynn). 🦚

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Deborah Humphries shared photos of a **White-eyed Vireo** on the Greensprings Trail on September 2 (left photo below), and a **Brown Thrasher** in her yard on September 10 (right photo below).



Carol Annis found a lovely **Veery** in Toano on September 14 (photo below).



On September 16, **Shirley Devan** saw two **Bobolinks** (photo at upper right) at the Warhill Sports Complex under the power lines, likely on a rest and feeding stop while on their fall migration route southward. With the assistance of **Nancy Barnhart**, Shirley was able to identify the bird on the left in her photo as a female and the bird on the right as a

male. The dark patch near the eye is a transitional "look" as the male molts.



Baltimore Orioles are migrating through our area, and **Jan Lockwood** had one in her yard on September 22 (photo below). Jan said: "As you can imagine, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird was furious with the intruder."



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Recent Sightings, Continued from Page 7



Inge Curtis is missing a delightful little **Northern Parula** (photo to the left) that she saw every day this summer until September 21. Said Inge: "He flew south sometime during the last few days. He is probably the cleanest little bird around. I send him off with fervent good wishes, He brought me much joy." Perhaps to compensate for the loss of this friend, Inge traveled to Chincoteague and Assateague islands September 22-23 where she saw and photographed many different shorebirds, including a **Little Blue Heron** (left column, bottom photo), **Willetts** and **Laughing Gulls** (photo upper right), and a **Rudy Turnstone** (right column, bottom photo).



For most of September, **Mary Ellen Hodges** enjoyed watching several **Red-eyed Vireos** (photo left) feeding on the fruits of beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) and pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) in her yard.



With a wink, **Gary and Ann Carpenter** reported on their September 25 birding activities: "On a morning of tough birding with our muffins and coffee on the patio we saw not only the usual suspects but a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, a **White-breasted Nuthatch**, and an **American Redstart**." Keep up the hard work, Gary and Ann! 🐦

WBC MEMBERSHIP

This month, we warmly welcome two new members, Barbara Smyth and Anne Nordin, to the Williamsburg Bird Club. If you would like to join our club, you can find a copy of a membership form on Page 9 and on our website at the following link:

<https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/219-2/>. 🐦



2021 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
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ANNUAL DONATIONS FROM OUR LOCALLY-OWNED BIRD STORES

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

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

Backyard Birder



Backyard Birder Seed & Supply (located in Williamsburg at the Quarterpath Shopping Center near the Kingsmill Harris Teeter) supports the WBC through donations and a 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/>