



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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

November 2022

### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Nancy Barnhart

As I begin to write this column I'm in the airport at Veracruz, Mexico with my fellow travelers awaiting a flight to Mexico City. I had thought of several topics I wanted to write about this month, but having spent the last ten days in Mexico witnessing the world's greatest raptor migration, I feel the need to share it.



The so-called "River of Raptors" that migrates over Veracruz funnels down the coastal plain through the narrow strip of land between the Gulf of Mexico and the Sierra Madre mountain system. Well over four million raptors from across North America will pass overhead during the three months that hawk counters work from two different locations approximately 10 kilometers apart. Pronatura, Veracruz, part of Pronatura Mexico, the largest conservation organization in Mexico, runs the two Hawkwatches with paid counters working ten hours a day. It is an impressive sight to watch them with multiple clicker-counters in hand, counting by tens, fifties, and hundreds when necessary. One counter (photo below) had three clickers in one hand, each for a different species, and a fourth in the hand that also held his binoculars. The constant background sound of "click click click" as one calls out "Swainson's" and another "Broad-winged" adds to the fullness of the experience. The counters are an impressive group and work long and hard days. (Continued on Page 3)



One of the paid hawk counters in Veracruz.  
Photo by Nancy Barnhart.

### UPCOMING PROGRAM

By Patty Maloney

**November 16: 7:00 p.m. (Zoom only): Alex Wilke, "Connections Across the Hemispheres: Shorebird Conservation on Virginia's Eastern Shore"**

Our speaker for November will be Alex Wilke, a Coastal Scientist at The Nature Conservancy's Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Did you know that the Eastern Shore of Virginia is one of the most important places for shorebirds in the entire Western Hemisphere? It is! We will discuss the global plight of shorebird populations as they face threats such as habitat loss, disturbance, and climate change. We will also explore the important coastal habitats that we have right here on the Eastern Shore that support many of these shorebird species and learn more about the work that the Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve and their partners are doing to protect and manage these species. 🐦



Alex Wilke banding an American Oystercatcher.  
Photo by Kristy Lapenta, TNC.

## WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB

### Executive Board 2022

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<b>Conservation Committee</b> Cheryl J. Jacobson	303-519-0989 <a href="mailto:icheryljoy@aol.com">icheryljoy@aol.com</a>

## WBC MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**Election in November:** We will elect WBC's Executive Board for 2023 during our Zoom meeting on November 16. The Nominating Committee has proposed the following slate of officers:

- President - Nancy Barnhart
- Vice-President, Programs - Patty Maloney
- Vice-President, Editor - Mary Ellen Hodges
- Treasurer - Ann Carpenter
- Secretary - Cathy Millar
- Member-at-Large/Asst. Editor - Gary Carpenter
- Member-at-Large - Shirley Devan.

**Time to Renew for 2023:** It's not too early to renew your membership in the WBC for 2023. You can do so online at <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/membership> using PayPal or you can download and print a membership form from that page which you can then mail in with a check. The form can also be printed from Page 9 of this newsletter. Marking the form to indicate that you wish to receive our newsletter only by email saves paper and it also allows the club to save on printing and postage costs and direct more of our income to our programs and projects. 🐦

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT – DECEMBER 18

*By Jim Corliss*

The Williamsburg Bird Club is participating in its 46th Christmas Bird Count this year on Sunday, December 18. The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and our count data become part of the 123-year-long record of bird population trends in North America, Central America, and parts of South America. The CBC is the longest-running community science bird project in the United States. The CBC is conducted by establishing "count circles" that are 15 miles in diameter. Within each circle teams and individuals spend the day counting and identifying all of the birds that are observed in their specific areas within the circle. Our bird club is the steward of the Williamsburg Count Circle, which is centered in Colonial Williamsburg and extends out to cover Jamestown Island to the west, Hog Island to the south, and a small portion of Gloucester to the east. Club members can participate on field teams or at their homes as feeder-watchers. In recent years we have had between 100 and 150 members of our club and community provide their count data for our Williamsburg circle. If you are interested in participating in this important citizen science project, please contact Jim Corliss at [jcorliss240@cox.net](mailto:jcorliss240@cox.net). 🐦



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER, Continued from Page 1

My fellow travelers and I were lucky enough to be present during the one hour of the greatest number of migrating hawks in that time frame anywhere on the planet. 150,000 raptors that had been backed up by bad weather filled the skies over the bottleneck of the hawkwatch site seeking thermals. The majority were Swainson's Hawks joined by Broad-winged, Cooper's, and Sharp-shinned hawks, Northern Harriers, falcons, and others. The migrants gather in enormous vortexes and rise with the thermals. As the thermals break up, the birds stream out in search of the next one. They continue south in "rivers" that stretch from horizon to horizon. In addition to raptors we saw thousands of migrating Wood Storks, American White Pelicans, Anhingas, and even some Roseate Spoonbills. Jaw-dropping. Indescribable. It was an awesome and moving experience. The presence of a "white" Broad-winged Hawk (photo below) the day before was magical.



"White" Broad-winged Hawk. Photo by Nancy Barnhart.

In addition to running the two Hawkwatches, Pronatura has a strong educational program. We were at their site in Chichicaxtle, the more rural of their two hawkwatch locations, when the children's program was being conducted. It was a great sight to see 30 children from this small town with Sibley guides and binoculars learning about raptors and conservation. Land stewardship is an important component of Pronatura's conservation work. They promote "community sustainable development along with conservation and sustainable management of priority ecosystems." Pronatura employs three counters and an "observer" at each of the two sites. They run on a very small budget and rely heavily on ecotourism/birding trips that bring visitors to the Hawkwatches. You can learn more by following on their

Facebook page, [Veracruz Rio de Rapaces](#), or many other places on the web if you are familiar with Spanish.

Watching these birds make this incredible journey, and knowing they will do it again in the spring, is truly inspiring. It is a vivid reminder of the global world of migration. It is also a reminder of the urgent necessity to conserve habitats in every way we can.

Happy Birding! 🐦



WBC members who made the trip to Veracruz. Left to Right: Cindy Hamilton, Nancy Barnhart, Sue Mutell, Bill Williams, and Shirley Devan.



Some of the 150,000 migrating hawks over Veracruz! Photo by Nancy Barnhart.



## UPCOMING NOVEMBER 19 FIELD TRIP: GRANDVIEW NATURE PRESERVE, HAMPTON

By George Martin



Dunes at Grandview Nature Preserve. Photo by M.E.Hodges.

The Club's November field trip will be to Grandview Nature Preserve in Hampton, scheduled for Saturday, November 19. Nancy Barnhart will lead participants through marshes, woodlands, and an extended beach. It will be an early opportunity to see several of the area's winter seabird residents. Last year, the group saw Scoters, Loons, Gannets, and several shorebirds from the beach, plus a Sedge Wren in the marshes. Of course, there's no guarantee on what will be present this year, but I'd say the past experience is a good indicator.

We'll meet at the Preserve entrance on State Park Drive at 8:00 a.m. There should be ample parking on the street. If you'd like to car pool, please advise George Martin at [grm0803@gmail.com](mailto:grm0803@gmail.com). Those who wish to car pool should meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center at 7:00 a.m. for prompt departure, and no later than 7:15 a.m. I expect the group will be birding most of the morning. 🐦

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## MONTHLY BIRD WALKS

By Scott Hemler

We had eleven people come out for the monthly bird walk at New Quarter Park on October 22. We saw 32 species of birds! Our winter residents are arriving and we saw quite a few Yellow-Rumped Warblers. We also saw a Red-eyed Vireo who did not seem to be in any hurry to head south! It is unusual to see them here this late in the season. It was a beautiful morning for a walk and the birds were fairly abundant. You can find a complete list of the birds we saw at this location in eBird: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S121117042>.

Our next walk will be at New Quarter Park on Saturday, November 26. We will meet in the parking lot by the park office at 8:00 a.m. Binoculars are available for check out at the park office if anyone needs them. 🐦



The cheerful birders who participated in our October walk at New Quarter Park. Photo by Scott Hemler.



## OCTOBER'S TRIP TO THE EASTERN SHORE

By George Martin

Birds were everywhere! That's a pretty accurate description of the Club's field trip to the Eastern Shore on Saturday, October 15. Ivan Munkres led the group of 13 birders, with stops at three sites.

We started at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel Overlook, where close to a thousand gulls were hanging out on the beach below the parking area. The brush to the north of the parking area provided cover for White-crowned Sparrows, and a Black-throated Blue Warbler flushed from the area.

The next stop was the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge. Blue Jays appeared to be having a convention there. Yellow-rumped Warblers were common. Mixed in with their flocks were both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets, a Hermit Thrush, and a Magnolia Warbler, to name a few species. At Ramp Road, a couple of White Ibis appeared, and a Northern Harrier floated by overhead.

The last birding stop was Kiptopeke State Park. The Hawkwatch did not disappoint, as Sharp-Shinned Hawks, American Kestrels, and even a Common Nighthawk soared over the platform. Red-breasted Nuthatches visited the feeder near the parking area, while lingering Ruby-throated Hummingbirds sipped at the sugar water vessels near the platform. On the trail, more warblers were observed, including a Blackpoll Warbler with a crossed bill (see photo). Several of the participants ended the excursion by stopping by the Cape Charles Brewing Company for a hearty lunch before heading back to Williamsburg.

Here's the link to the trip report in eBird, listing all 74 species identified: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/80244>.



*Eastern Wood-Pee-wee. Photographed on the Eastern Shore by Dan Earnhardt.*



*The field trip group on the Baywoods Trail at Kiptopeke State Park. Photo by George Martin.*



*Some of the many Blue Jays seen in the Eastern Shore of Virginia NWR. Photo by Dan Earnhardt.*



*Blackpoll Warbler with bill deformity. Photo by Dan Earnhardt.*



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS: SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS DESCRIBE THEIR NATURE CAMP EXPERIENCES

*By Lee Schuster*

The essays below were written by the three Williamsburg area students who attended Nature Camp during the Summer 2022 season on scholarships awarded by the Williamsburg Bird Club. Nature Camp, located in Vesuvius, Virginia, is a private, non-profit, residential, co-ed summer camp specializing

in natural history and environmental science education. The goal of Nature Camp is to foster an appreciation and love for nature through direct experience and to inspire the young people of today to become environmentally responsible and conscientious citizens of tomorrow. It is first and foremost an academic camp that emphasizes hands-on, field-based, experiential learning. The WBC has been awarding scholarships to Nature Camp since 2008. We currently work cooperatively with five other local organizations to collectively provide approximately 12 scholarships to area students, grades 5-12, each year. Scholarship applications are posted each year on the WBC's website, usually at the beginning of October with applications due no later than October 31. Scholarship winners are selected and notified of the award in November so that they may apply to the camp in January when Nature Camp begins accepting applications for its summer season.

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### KIERA SOHONI, 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

Nature Camp was probably the best two weeks of my summer. It all started when I first got there. The first day of camp was probably the hardest. I knew absolutely no one in my bunkhouse and I didn't know my way around. The person who slept in the bunk under me introduced herself and we quickly became friends. Over the next few days I met the rest of the girls in my bunkhouse. And I started to figure out where everything was.

At Nature Camp you get to choose a major. I chose nature writing. (Well actually, it was my third choice, but still I kinda picked it.) Nature writing was really fun and we got to learn about many parts of nature and write about them. I would say it was a great choice.

Another fun thing at camp was a boat-making challenge. You could make a boat, and at the end of the challenge there was a race. Three boats could win. You could win for speed, creativity, and most good looking. My friends and I won for creativity. It was

really fun and even if we didn't win I would still have had fun.

One other thing we did was go on Sunday hikes. Now, I'm not the greatest at hiking, so I wasn't pumped about going. But it ended up being really fun. Two of my friends were on the same hike as me. And we found fungi growing out of a dead bug's body. Apparently a type of fungi can take over a bug's body and move them around if a spore gets under the bug's exoskeleton. The fungi can grow into the shape of the bug's body, take over the bug, and when it moves the bug to the place it wants, it will kill the bug and grow out of its head. Yes, that's the most interesting thing I learned at nature camp. I'm not weird, I promise.

The last thing we did at camp was closing ceremony. This was really emotional for a lot of counselors and even some kids. Nature camp was our whole life for two weeks. (Not for the counselors; they were there for two and a half months.) It was the best two weeks of my summer.

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### ASHER SOHONI, 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

Thank you Williamsburg Bird Club for giving me the Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarship. I learned so much about so many topics while I was there and came away with far more knowledge of how the natural world works. At camp I learned about the way the terrain there was formed, the various plants that grow there, the types of insects and other animals that live there, and lots of other various interesting

facts about the world around me. We went into depth about macroinvertebrates, and how you can find them and use their presence to figure out how healthy a body of water is, or how healthy a river or stream is. I majored in limnology, the study of freshwater ecosystems, and we learned how to identify different freshwater fish, and how they interact with  
(Continued on Page 7)



things around them. We played lots of games and had lots of fun, all while learning about different topics and studying nature.

Botany was one of my favorite subjects this year, and we learned about various tree adaptations and features. I learned about burls, the round things growing on the side of a tree sometimes, which I had noticed before, but never asked about, and about spikes on a type of tree that appear to have no use now but may have protected them from mammoth sloths called Megatherium, that used to exist in the area (and are now extinct). One incredible moment at Nature Camp, which I doubt I will ever repeat, was getting to see a hummingbird nest. We were going birdwatching with one of the counselors, and he saw a hummingbird fly to a tree, he looked where it landed, and saw its nest. We all stopped, and he pointed out the little bits of moss that made up its nest. It was

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#### **DELANEY RANTZ, 10<sup>TH</sup> GRADE**

Thanks to the Millin Family and Williamsburg Bird Club, I received a scholarship to attend Nature Camp this summer in Vesuvius, Virginia.

I learned so many new things, and it made me happy to be at camp. We were given different subjects we could major in, and I chose entomology. Our entomology group was small (around 6 people), and we had two college student instructors. They were both funny, always engaging with the kids, and supportive when kids wanted to find out more about bugs they saw. We found some very interesting moths, to include a Scarlett Lichen moth. Some days we would have classes in the museum, and some days we would hike to the meadow to look at bugs. I felt like I learned a lot more than I've learned in science class at school.

I was there over the 4th of July, so we had some fun activities that day. To begin the day, we did a trash hike where we picked up trash alongside the road. We then later used the most interesting pieces of trash to show off during a parade later in the day. The most interesting pieces of trash were a pool floatie, a frog toy, and a "do not enter" sign. We also

incredibly small, and even when it was pointed out to me, it was hard to find.

I have heard many stories from friends about how food at their camps was terrible, but at Nature Camp that was never the case. We had a different interesting recipe every day and they were all delicious.

Nature Camp has all the benefits of learning, without all the drawbacks school usually has. For instance, we can go on tangents about various topics to learn about things we want to learn about, while still learning everything we would otherwise. One memorable tangent was one about how strangler figs behave and take over their host, eventually killing it. We refine our ability to notice small things out in the world while simultaneously learning how to better decipher what those things mean. All in all, it was a great experience that I would love to repeat, and I am grateful that I was able to go and come back better.

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had relay races, and a picnic (The BLTs served at the picnic were so good!).

Speaking of food, the food they served every day was perfect. The food was always fresh and made from scratch. Some of my favorite foods were a dish called "dirty vegan", falafel with pita bread, and grilled cheese. The lemonade was also very good!

Nature Camp staff and counselors were all so supportive, and respectful. They were always engaging with us, set up games, checked on how everyone was doing, etc.

Unfortunately my time there was cut short by a week because covid started circulating among the campers. Fortunately I did not get it, but having to come home early was really tough. I was sad to leave camp. There were things planned that I had really been looking forward to (the Sunday hike, going to Table Rock, the talent show, etc.).

Even though my time at camp was cut short, I enjoyed it while it lasted. Thank you for giving me this opportunity. 🐦

## EACH AND EVERY BIRD COUNTS! STORY OF THE RIVERS EDGE NEST 3 OSPREY

By Cheryl Jacobson

*" . . . while birds remain everywhere, people are actually seeing far fewer of them than just 50 years ago, according to a new study. It estimates that North America is home to nearly three billion fewer birds today compared to 1970—that's more than 1 in 4 birds that have disappeared from the landscape in a mere half a century." (Jillian Mock, [2019](#))*

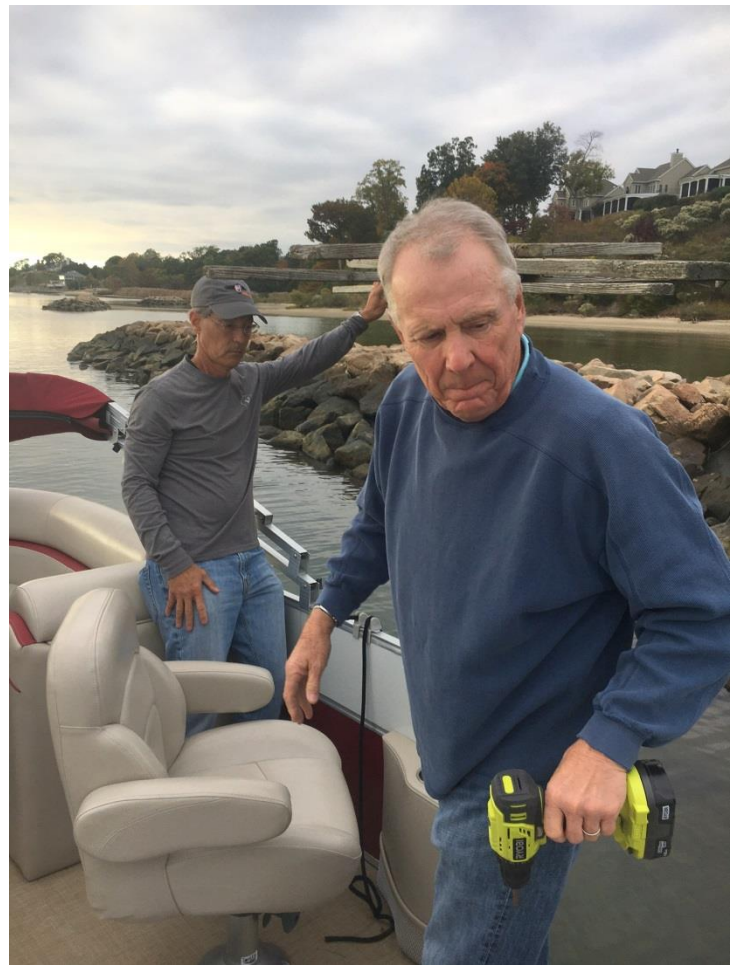
The study referred to in the quote above, published by Kenneth V. Rosenberg et al. in the journal [Science](#) three years ago, shocked the birding community and served as a call to conservation action. We all want to respond by doing big things in big ways, but it is also critical that we get involved when needed to save one bird at a time.

I have been monitoring osprey nests on Rivers Edge/James River at Kingsmill for eight years. Since 2015, Nest 3 has been occupied by a successful pair who have fledged 12 chicks. During the very early spring of 2022, the nest platform was destroyed in a storm with only the cross supports remaining. The pair was very determined and built a nest with sticks hanging on the supports. However, these supports were not sufficient to hold the nesting material and five times the nests fell into the river. Finally, in June, the osprey pair gave up but continued to perch on the broken cross supports until they migrated this fall.



Osprey on the broken nest platform earlier this summer. Photo by Cheryl Jacobson.

Knowing that ospreys have strong site fidelity, I was determined to rebuild the platform once they left. However, I knew I would need assistance so I was thrilled when Bob Buenting, a resident of Rivers Edge, heard about my involvement and called me to see how we could proceed. After constructing the platform, the next task was how to get a boat, support a ladder in the boat, and lift and secure the new, very heavy platform onto the post and cross supports. Bob recruited Roger Emory, who owns a party barge, and on October 24 we set off to install the platform. All obstacles were overcome and our efforts were successful. I cannot thank Bob and Roger enough for their assistance. Now we wait until the osprey pair return in April 2023 to have a successful breeding season. 🦅



"Osprey Warriors" Bob Buenting (foreground) and Roger Emory work to repair the nest platform. Photo by Cheryl Jacobson.





## 2023 Williamsburg Bird Club Membership Form

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Email	Phone	

Your email will be used for WBC's email mailing list. You will receive announcements of upcoming bird walks, field trips, meetings, other events, and the full color email edition of the newsletter through this mailing list.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do you also want a b&w paper newsletter sent to your physical address?

**Membership**      \_\_\_\_\_ New\*      \_\_\_\_\_ Renewing

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual    \$20

\_\_\_\_\_ Family       \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ Patron        \$35

\_\_\_\_\_ Student      \$5

\*How did you hear about the Bird Club?

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### 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

\$\_\_\_\_\_ the Bird Club Conservation 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](mailto: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/>