



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

Vol. 47 No. 9

www.williamsburgbirdclub.org

November 2023

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Nancy Barnhart



November Greetings!

Days are getting shorter and fall migration is wrapping up. Migration is such an exciting time that we almost need the relative quiet of November and the gradual return of winter birds to catch our breath. In December

we will take a short break from WBC meetings and the newsletter to allow for plenty of time with family and friends over the holidays. Still to come in December, however, are a Bird Walk at New Quarter Park on December 23 and one of our very important annual events, the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), this year on Sunday December 17. We are very fortunate to have one of our own, Rexanne Bruno, continuing to serve as the state compiler for the CBC. Rexanne will be the presenter at our November meeting where we will learn everything we need to know about the count and how to participate. Special thanks to Jim Corliss for being our long-serving Williamsburg CBC compiler.

Thinking of those returning winter visitors, one of the standouts is the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (YBSA). Some find its plumage rather "messy" with its mottled back and sides. But seeing that large white shoulder patch, crisp red, black, and white facial pattern, and occasional glimpses of its yellow belly give it a distinguished look. It's a relatively quiet woodpecker, as woodpeckers go, with a fairly soft, Morse-code type of tapping. It makes a cat-like nasal "mew" you can hear often. The YBSA habit of drilling rows or bands of holes in tree bark is unique and readily visible if you're out walking near or in the woods. These birds feed on sap, insects, fruit, and berries and will also occasionally come to feeders for suet and sunflower seeds, nuts, and fruit.

This species prefers woodland. While it will drill in hundreds of species of trees, its favorites are birches and maples. The sapsuckers provide food for other
(Continued on Page 3)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

By Patty Maloney

November 15, 6:00 p.m. (In-person at Quarterpath Recreation Center and via Zoom): Rexanne Bruno, "Christmas Bird Counts in Williamsburg, in Virginia, and Beyond."

Join us as Rexanne Bruno, the VA/DC Regional Editor for Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs), entertains us with facts (and fiction) on the history and records from CBCs in the area plus tells us how we can get involved in the Williamsburg CBC.

Save the Date: January 17. Dixie Sommers (VSO member and world-traveler/birder), "Exploring the Birds and Islands of New Zealand." 🐦



The 15-mile-diameter area covered by the annual Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Rexanne Bruno will discuss CBCs at our November 15 meeting. See Jim Corliss's article on Page 6 for plans for this year's December 17 count.

WILLIAMSBURG BIRD CLUB
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**WBC MEMBERSHIP and ELECTION OF 2024
EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Please welcome new members Catherine Johnson, Anne Beckley, and Karen Hartman Brown!

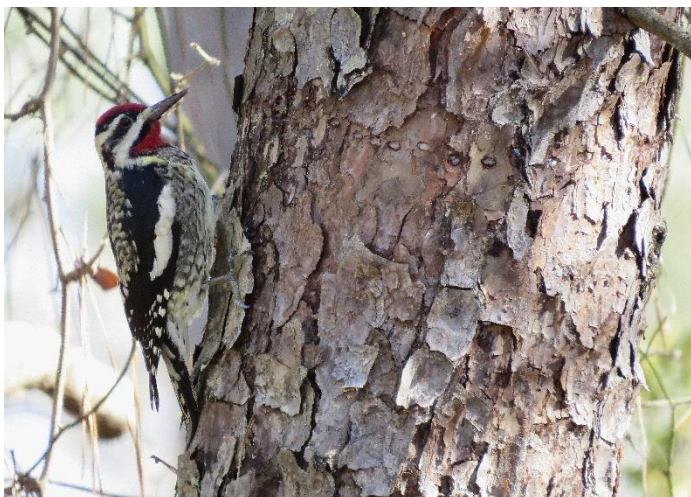
Upcoming Election: At our November 15 meeting, WBC members will elect the officers who, along with our immediate past president, will constitute our Executive Board for 2024. A Nominating Committee consisting of Shirley Devan, Jeanette Navia, and Cheryl Jacobson has proposed the following slate of nominees for consideration by the membership:

- President: Nancy Barnhart
- Vice President, Programs: Patty Maloney
- Vice President, Newsletter: Mary Ellen Hodges
- Treasurer: Ann Carpenter
- Secretary: Cathy Millar
- Member at Large: Donna Benson
- Member at Large: Deborah Humphries

Time to Renew for 2024: It's not too early to renew your membership in the WBC for 2024. You can do so online at <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/renew/> 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. 🐦



A familiar sight in our area: the horizontal rows of sapwells drilled into the bark of a tree by a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Photo by Nancy Barnhart.



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Photo by Nancy Barnhart.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER, Continued from Page 1

species of birds besides the sapsuckers, thus the label “keystone species”, one that has a direct effect on others within its environment. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, hummingbirds rely on the sap from these sapwells so much “that they time their spring migration with the arrival of sapsuckers.” A sapsucker will “tend” its holes to keep them open and, using its tongue, will lap up sap and all the insects trapped in the wells. It also eats part of the cambium of the tree, the active growing layer of the trunk responsible for making new cells.

Some consider this bird to be a pest with the potential to damage trees. Most of the sapwells are shallow holes leaving wounds that the tree can quickly heal over. However, opinions vary on the severity of damage that sapsuckers can cause. Some research shows it is possible for the extent of drilling to result in girdling of the bark which can eventually kill the tree by interrupting the flow of water and nutrients. Some researchers report this will only happen in an otherwise weakened tree. (U.S. Forest Service, University of Maryland Extension, and others)

While these birds tend to be seen foraging by themselves, appropriately, a group of sapsuckers is known as a “slurp” (iBird Pro). At our house the first “returnee” of the season arrived on October 12. It tends to spend much of its time in the holly trees where there are visible yet not extensive bands of holes. It’s a favorite to watch and, so far, is not doing damage to the trees. Luckily for us we have a long time to watch these unique birds as they can stay well into April and May. Happy to see them back!

Heading into winter, good luck to all for a successful and fun Christmas Bird Count. See you out there. Happy Birding! 🐦



Members of Cape Henry Audubon and other visitors to our area joined WBC members at our October 28 Bird Walk at New Quarter Park.

BIRD WALKS: UPCOMING WALKS ON NOV. 25 AND DEC. 23

By Nancy Barnhart

We had a great bird walk at New Quarter Park on the morning of October 28 with 18 participants including visitors from Cape Henry Audubon and other out-of-town visitors. The highlight was at the floating dock where we were entertained the entire time watching a gorgeous male Northern Harrier hunting over the marshes. Then we were quite surprised to see two Nelson's Sparrows in the marsh grass just across the water from us. We entered a total of 41 species into eBird: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S153283715>.

Our last two walks of 2023 will be on November 25 and December 23 at New Quarter Park. As usual, we'll meet in the parking lot by the park office at 8:00 a.m. Binoculars are available for checkout at the park office should anyone need them. 🐦



Nelson's Sparrow photographed by Nancy Barnhart during the Oct. 28 Bird Walk at New Quarter Park.

FIELD TRIP REPORT: TRIP TO GRANDVIEW ON NOV. 18

By George Martin

Saturday, October 21 – Eastern Shore

Despite the ominous weather forecasts early in the week, the field trip to the Eastern Shore was dry. Eighteen birders, led by Deborah Humphries, enjoyed seeing nine species of raptors and a lot of gulls, particularly the Laughing Gulls near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Overlook. A Pine Warbler snuck in among the large flock of Yellow-rumped Warblers at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. While passerines tended to hunker down in the strong winds, several ventured into the puddles on the road leading to the Ramp Road parking area, including a Palm Warbler. It was a good day for falcons at the Kiptopeke State Park Hawkwatch, with Kestrels, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons flying by. In all, group members identified 52 species. The following link is to the eBird trip report, comprising five different checklists: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/166438?view=checklists>.

Saturday, November 18 – Grandview Nature Preserve, Hampton

Next up on our trip list is the [Grandview Nature Preserve](#) on Saturday, November 18. Michelle Gianvecchio will be our leader. This trip provides an early opportunity to see several species of wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. We'll meet along the entrance road to the Preserve at 8:00 a.m. and bird

through most of the morning. If you would like to carpool, please let me know at grm0803@gmail.com.



Northern Harrier photographed by Deborah Humphries during the Eastern Shore field trip.



Scenes from the October field trip to the Eastern Shore: Upper Left, American Kestrel photographed by Deborah Humphries; Upper right, Red-tailed Hawk photographed by Nancy Barnhart; Below, trip participants gathered along the Butterfly Trail at the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, photographed by George Martin.



2023 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

By Jim Corliss

On Sunday December 17 the WBC will conduct our annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in the Williamsburg area. The National Audubon Society has administered the CBC for 124 years, and 2023 will mark the 47th year of conducting the count in Williamsburg. Our Williamsburg count area is defined by a circle that is 15 miles in diameter and centered at the Colonial Williamsburg Visitor Center. This location is advantageous because the circle encompasses a wide variety of habitats and includes birding hot spots such as Jamestown Island, Hog Island, New Quarter Park, Cheatham Annex, and portions of Gloucester along the York River. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running citizen science project in the United States. More information regarding its history and benefits to conservation can be found online at <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>.

The Christmas Bird Count is not only an important citizen science project. It's fun to participate, and the CBC is also a volunteer opportunity for those of us

who are Virginia Master Naturalists. Please consider participating this year—we especially need more feeder watchers to tally birds in neighborhood areas that aren't covered by the field teams. Participating as a feeder watcher follows a protocol very similar to Project Feederwatch administered by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. You can observe multiple times throughout the day and for as long as you like each time. Even just 30 minutes of data is valuable. It's also possible to venture out beyond your backyard and tally birds around your neighborhood as long as we keep track of who is covering specific areas to avoid overlap.

Your count results will be compiled with all of the data collected on the count day and submitted into the CBC database maintained by the National Audubon Society. We're hoping for a lot of participation this year, so please don't hesitate to contact me at jcorliss240@cox.net with questions about how to be a part of this year's count! 🐦

NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD AND BIRDER SHOW

By Shirley Devan

Please join birding enthusiasts Monday, January 1, 2024, at New Quarter Park at the Fire Circle for the "New Year's Day Bird and Birder Show." The 2024 gathering will be the 18th "almost-annual" event.

We'll convene at the Fire Circle between 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. If it's a chilly day, the park may have a fire going in the fire circle. Relax and visit with new and old friends on the benches or venture out around the park to find our wintering birds.

The address for New Quarter Park is 1000 Lakeshead Drive, Williamsburg. You can find directions to the park on its website at <https://www.yorkcounty.gov/1816/New-Quarter-Park>. The Park brochure on the website shows the path from the parking lot to the Fire Circle.

Come as you are! Bring visiting family, friends, and children; come early, stay late, or just drop by. Remember, every bird is a year bird on New Year's Day! I look forward to welcoming you to celebrate the start of 2024. 🐦

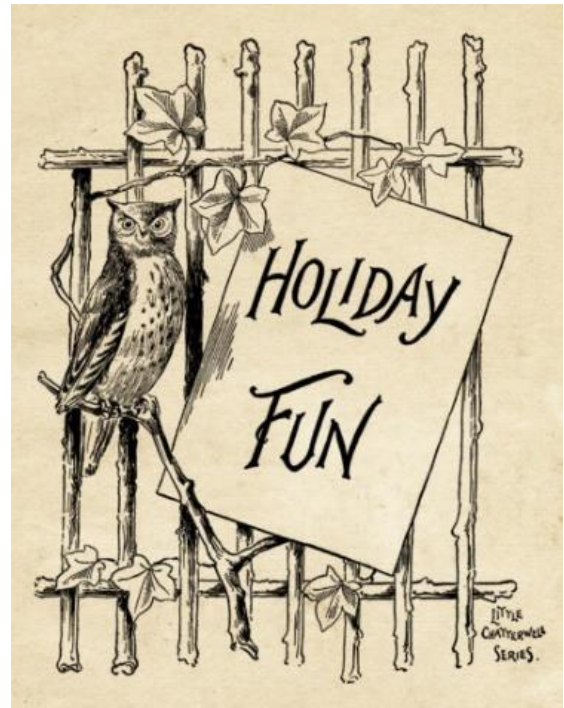


Image courtesy of the [Old Design Shop](#).

CLOSE TO HOME

Summary by Cathy Millar

This summary of Barbara Houston's presentation, "Close to Home: 10 places to go and things to shoot close to home!", at our October 18 meeting cannot include her many splendid photos. If you didn't attend, you will definitely want to watch the WBC's YouTube video of the meeting at the following link to see them: <https://youtu.be/G0SPj3nZ7sq>. Barbara, when not working full time in accounting at a paper mill in Hopewell, is busy looking for birds on weekends, vacations, and even on her drive to work, to photograph them using mostly her Canon RF 800mm F11 telephoto lens. She has also been president of the Colonial Nature Photography Club. She generously provided us with instructions on how to find her favorite birding spots as well as the best times of day for optimal lighting and viewing conditions and available amenities at each site. The following ten places are within an hour's drive of Barbara's home in New Kent County.

1. Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery: a 444-acre tract in Charles City County featuring a wide variety of habitat including a quiet 99-acre lake with working dam, docks, and walkways. Only non-motorized boats are permitted. Lovely photos of Kingfishers, Prothonotary Warblers, Spotted Sandpipers, Barn Swallows, Indigo Buntings, and Ovenbirds were among the species featured.

2. Shirley Plantation: open active farm fields bordered by wild flowers in Charles City County with access via a gravel road off of Route 106. Because this is private property, please keep to the road. Bald Eagles, Red-tailed and Red-shouldered hawks, a Merlin, Orchard Orioles, Horned Larks, Savannah Sparrows, a pair of Peregrine Falcons, Blue-grey Gnatcatchers, Great Crested Flycatchers, Indigo Buntings, and three Sandhill Cranes on nearby Turkey Island Road were among the species featured.

3. Malvern Hill National Battlefield: open area in Henrico County where the information kiosk is often home to 12 nesting families of Barn Swallows. American Kestrels perch on cannons, and the fields host Eastern Meadowlarks.

4. Chamberlayne Marsh: a limited viewing area with a lot of dead trees in the middle of an industrial center in Henrico County. It features a night-roosting area for Great Egrets, nesting area for Green Herons, and summer location for wandering Anhingas.

5. Henricus Park/Dutch Gap: freshwater swamp and marsh, waterways, and woodlands with paths and observation platforms in Chester. Supports a great variety of wintering ducks, a Great Blue Heron rookery, Tree Swallows, American Kestrels, Swamp Sparrows, Barred Owls, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, and Wilson's Snipes.

6. Deep Bottom Park: a variety of habitat in Henrico County with walking trails along a creek and piers and boat ramps. Recently planted young pine trees offer the photographer the right height for photos of birds perched on top of them. Yellow-breasted Chats, Prairie Warblers, Indigo Buntings, breeding Prothonotary Warblers, and Tree Swallows were highlights.

7. Bethel Beach Natural Area Preserve: long sandy beaches, low dunes, and salt marsh on the western shore of the Chesapeake Bay in Mathews Co. It is a popular breeding place for Clapper Rails; and Barbara showed pictures of adorable youngsters. Willets, Black-bellied Plovers, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Black Skimmers, Marbled Godwits, Royal Terns, Mute Swans, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitchers, Semipalmated Plovers, Seaside Sparrows, and Merlins were among the birds featured in photos.

8. Poquoson: Messick Point and Thomas Jefferson Rollins Nature Area offer great views over the salt marshes of Back River. Wonderful photos of Clapper Rail and Yellow-crowned Night Heron families, Green Herons, Least and Sandwich terns, Great Blue Herons, and Bald Eagles were highlights.

9. Fort Monroe: wide variety of habitat for shorebirds, waterfowl, raptors, and small birds at the southeastern tip of the Virginia Peninsula in Hampton. Wonderful photos of Common Loons, Razorbills, Surf Scoters, Horned Grebes, Brown Pelicans, American Oystercatchers, Killdeer, and Eastern Meadowlarks were among those shared. There's a Great Blue Heron rookery near the campground and evidence of nesting Cooper's Hawks. The highlight is a large colony of nesting Yellow-crowned Night Herons in the center of the fort.

10. Phoebus Waterfront Park: featuring a dock and landing for kayaks and canoes, it is very close to Fort Monroe. Pelicans and a variety of gulls and terns are close to the dock, and it is a great spot to photograph them in flight. 🐦

VSO FIELD TRIP TO THE OUTER BANKS IN FEBRUARY 2024

By Shirley Devan

Plan to join the Virginia Society of Ornithology's (VSO) winter field trip at the Outer Banks of North Carolina February 2-4, 2024. Experienced leaders, beautiful locations, and friendly bird enthusiasts will provide a delightful weekend at one of the birdiest spots on the East Coast. Field trip destinations for the weekend include Lake Mattamuskeet NWR, Alligator River NWR, Pea Island, Jeanette's Pier, and Bodie Lighthouse. Come prepared for variable weather, lots of birds, and a great time!

All VSO field trips are open to VSO members at no charge. Renew or join the VSO for as little as \$20 per year at: <https://www.virginiabirds.org/join-renew>. The Comfort Inn South Oceanfront in Nags Head is the field trip headquarters. A special lodging rate (\$66) for VSO birders can be secured until January 1 (Call 252-441-6315). To register for the trip and get more information visit <https://www.virginiabirds.org/vso-events/obxtrip-2024>. Questions can also be directed to the field trip coordinator, Meredith Bell, at 804-824-4958 or merandlee@gmail.com. 🐦

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Close readers of Nancy Barnhart's "President's Corner" in our October newsletter, distributed to members late on the evening of September 30, might have noted Nancy's disappointment that the first American Flamingos ever reported in Virginia—seen only by two kayaking "non-birders" on September 1 on the shore of Plum Tree Island—could not be located again. If only we had waited one more day to finalize the newsletter, because on October 1 a flamingo was sighted at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. Over the following 12 days as many as two flamingos (apparently never spotted together) were seen off either Chincoteague or Assateague islands by numerous birders drawn to the opportunity to witness the presence of these rarities to our state. WBC Member **Judy Jones** made the trek up the Eastern Shore on October 11 and generously shared two of her extraordinary photos (below) of the **American Flamingo** she had the good fortune to view that day. The odd appearance this year of the American Flamingo in disparate areas in the eastern half of the U.S. as far north as Wisconsin has been credited to the effects of Hurricane Idalia in late August.





2024 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?

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

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 5% 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/>