



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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September 2025



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By Nancy Barnhart

September greetings! I hope you had a wonderful summer and found ways to keep cool during the long, hot, and humid days we endured. We're heading into a beautiful season here on the coastal plain and plenty of fun events with

WBC. Please read about our upcoming meetings and field trips in this newsletter. Thanks to Scott Hemler for leading our monthly bird walks at New Quarter Park. They continued to be popular even during those hot June, July, and August days. Thank you, Scott, for leading and persevering in some challenging weather!

If you're looking for a change of scene to go along with the change in weather, you might consider a road trip to Cape Charles and the Eastern Shore. Our October field trip will take us there, but if you can't wait, it's a wonderful fall destination any time. Birding on the Eastern Shore can accommodate any style. Whether you are up for a walk or would rather bird close to or from your car, it's all available. The Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge is open and free to the public. A visit to Ramp Road at the refuge can produce shore birds, long-legged waders, ibises, song birds, sparrows, hawks, and usually at least one vocal, if hidden, Clapper Rail.

Kiptopeke State Park is a favorite and always worth a visit. The hawkwatch platform will be a busy spot through November with Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO) hawkcounters Sage Church and Audrey Anderson counting every day. This year a new CVWO program features one of Virginia's best birders counting the "morning flight" at Sunset Beach. This is an interesting phenomenon that takes place on the tip of the Delmarva Peninsula, a fall migration hotspot. Nocturnal migrants find themselves on the tip of the peninsula as day breaks. After a night of flying, birds are not up to the water crossing that presents itself at that point. They then turn and fly a short distance north (Continued on Page 2)

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

By Patty Maloney

September 17, 6:00 p.m. for light refreshments, followed by the presentation at 6:30 p.m. Jamie Wick, "Costa Rica: Exploring the Osa Peninsula and the Tarcoles River". Meeting will be held in-person at the Quarterpath Recreation Center and via Zoom.

Costa Rica is estimated to have 5% of the world's biodiversity in 0.03% of the Earth's landmass. For nature photographers and enthusiasts, this makes the country a must-do destination. This presentation follows a multiday excursion photographing the amazing wildlife found along the Tarcoles River and Osa Peninsula regions. Jamie Wick is a freelance photographer and computer specialist located in Virginia. His work focuses on nature and conservation themes and has been published in *Sierra*, *Living Bird*, and *Virginia Wildlife* magazines.

Save the Date: October 15, Dan Cristol, Chancellor Professor of Biology at William & Mary, will give us a preview of his upcoming book, *Life Bird*. 🐦



Boat-billed Heron, Costa Rica. Photo by Jamie Wick.

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*White Ibis, Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge, July 21.
Photo by Nancy Barnhart.*

PRESIDENT'S CORNER, Continued from Page 1

to rest and refuel for the day. Our morning flight specialist, Baxter Beamer, is on location predawn, counting for several hours as the birds whip by, many of them in that northbound push. It is incredibly impressive to see and hear Baxter call out the species, somewhat of a blur, in their bounding flight. You can find Sunset Beach and a place to park by going down Wise Point Lane, just beyond the Cape Charles/Chesapeake Bay KOA. You can follow along daily at <http://trektellen.nl/site/info/3748> and also on the CVWO blog at <https://vawildliferesearch.org/cvwo-blog-1>.

We kick off fall with our first post-summer meeting on September 17. Jamie Wick's presentation on birding in Costa Rica will be visually dazzling and one you won't want to miss. I hope to see you there!

Happy Birding! 🐦

WBC MEMBERSHIP

Please welcome new members Molly Nealer and Davy Nealer!

The purpose of the Williamsburg Bird Club is to promote interest in the study of wild birds and in the protection of birds and their habitats. To join our club or renew your WBC membership, please go to <https://williamsburgbirdclub.org/membership> where you can either complete a membership form and pay your dues using PayPal online or download a form for printing and submitting by mail with a check. 🐦

BIRD WALKS: Next Walk is September 27

By Scott Hemler

WBC continued our “4th Saturday” bird walks at New Quarter Park over the summer. We had 14 people come out for our June 28 walk on what was a muggy morning. We saw or heard 28 species of birds. Many, like the Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo, were singing away in the trees. We saw four Great Egrets and heard a Clapper Rail down along Queens Creek. By 9:30 it was starting to get hot, so we called off the walk a little early.

The weather on July 26 was again hot and humid, but six people come out for our walk and it actually proved quite pleasant down at the dock along Queens Creek. We saw 21 species of birds. Again, there were several Great Egrets, but also Ospreys, along Queens Creek. Several Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were at the feeder by the park office. We also heard Summer Tanagers and Acadian Flycatchers in the woods. All in all,

it was a pleasant morning walk in the woods despite the heat and humidity!

August 23 was a beautiful morning and we had 11 people come out for the monthly walk. We saw 31 species of birds. Some of the highlights were 2 Great Egrets, 42 Laughing Gulls, and an Osprey down at the dock along Queens Creek. We also heard two Clapper Rails in the marsh there. Many of our summer residents were still present as we saw or heard an Acadian Flycatcher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and White-eyed Vireo, and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird was present at the feeder by the park office. We also enjoyed watching two raccoons looking down at us from their den in a hole in a tree along the trail to the fire pit! It was a great late summer morning for a bird walk that was enjoyed by all!

Our next “4th Saturday” bird walk will be held on September 27 at New Quarter Park. We’ll meet in the parking lot by the park office at 8:00 a.m. 🐦



Participants on our summer monthly bird walks at New Quarter Park (counterclockwise from top): June 28 (photo by Scott Hemler); July 26 (“selfie” photo by Nancy Barnhart), and August 23 (photo by Scott Hemler).

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS: SEPT. 20, JAMESTOWN BEACH & OCT. 18, EASTERN SHORE

By George Martin

Saturday, September 20 – Jamestown Beach Event Park

Field trips are starting again! The summer doldrums should be over by Saturday, September 20, when we'll meet at Jamestown Beach Event Park for a couple of hours of casual birding. Bring your coffee and your chair (oh, and binoculars) for a meetup at 8:00 a.m. It might be casual birding, but last year the group still recorded 43 species.

The park entrance is a right turn off State Route 31, just before the Jamestown Ferry. The park opens at 8:00 a.m. If you get there a little early, the gates may not be open yet, but the area around the entrance is usually pretty birdy. We'll congregate on the grassy area above the beach, which is a couple hundred yards on mostly paved paths from the parking lot. The

area is readily accessible for most folks with mobility challenges.

Babs Giffin will keep the eBird list and share it with participants. So let Babs know when you see something!

Saturday, October 18 – Eastern Shore

Mark your calendar for our club's annual birding trip to the Eastern Shore on Saturday, October 18. Club members usually identify 50+ species during this field trip, since we're able to take advantage of a variety of habitats during fall migration. The Kiptopeke Hawkwatch is always a highlight. In addition, some folks have expressed interest in arriving early to observe the Sunset Beach Morning Flight Count. More details to follow. 🐦

JUNE MEETING ON THE CHICKAHOMINY

By Nancy Barnhart

A hot evening didn't discourage 30 members of the WBC from gathering at Chickahominy Riverfront Park on June 18 for an evening of socializing and lively fun and games. Thank you to Cathy Flanagan for organizing this now-annual June meeting and for bringing her usual array of snacks and treats. Many other members also brought goodies and cold drinks to share so we quickly forgot about the heat. Thanks to all!

After catching up with one another we turned the meeting over to Judy Jones, who—along with Rick Brown—is one of our bluebird trail leaders and gurus. Judy prepared 20 questions for us and quickly had us stumped. For example: "How many SUBspecies of Eastern Bluebird are there?" If you guessed seven, you're correct! But most of us didn't know that in the moment. Another question that elicited a range of answers: "How fast does a bluebird fly?" Hmmm. Lots of guessing. The correct answer is 17 mph. Who knew? More fun questions ensued followed by a 3-year comparative update on bluebird nesting from Judy. Thank you, Judy!

After Judy got us warmed up, Cathy Flanagan got us laughing with Bird Jeopardy. Cathy created a Jeopardy Board with the following categories: Bluebirds, Raptors, Songs & Calls, Something Different??, and Bird Club History, complete with a Daily Double! We were in teams based on where we were sitting, and

the competition was deep and lively! An example: Calls and Songs for \$20 – "This bird's repeated buzzy call means a predator is nearby." The answer is Carolina Chickadee, but don't forget to pose it as a question! "What is a Carolina Chickadee?" And so it went, with someone always ready to point out you didn't put your answer in question form. Lots of fun and laughs. Thank you, Cathy!

Our June outdoor gathering is proving to be a popular way to get together and forget about the heat. I'm already brushing up on my bird knowledge and trivia for next year's challenges! 🐦



Club members enjoying refreshments at the June 18 gathering at Chickahominy Riverfront Park. Photo by Marc Thibault.

SUPPORT THE 2025 CVWO BIRDATHON

By Shirley Devan

The Coastal Virginia Birdathon (CVB) is hosted annually by the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory (CVWO). Grab your birding buddies and binoculars and join the day's fun! This year's event is Saturday, September 27.

In this fun and friendly team birding competition, teams compete to identify the greatest number of bird species in a single day. The primary goals of the CVB are to raise funds for CVWO and to raise awareness of fall bird migration along the coastal plain of Virginia (the area east of Interstate 95). The CVB occurs each year during peak migration when birds sing very little and many have molted out of their breeding plumages. Add in hatch-year birds, and you'll see why the competition is a challenge!

The event is open to anyone. Participants can form their own team, or a single individual can request to be placed with an existing team. There are five categories in which one can compete: 24-Hour, 3-Hour, Youth (age 18 & younger), and Special Venue (a smaller area such as wildlife refuge, park, or yard).



The fifth category, new this year, is "Large Team", such as a bird club. There is no fee to participate; however, all teams are encouraged to secure sponsors for donations, such as per species or flat-rate pledges from individuals, bird clubs, and businesses.

This birdathon is CVWO's single largest fundraising event of the year, and all funds donated are used to support CVWO's field research and environmental education programs. You can donate to any or all participating teams, which are listed on the CVWO website: <https://vawildliferesearch.org/>. 🐦

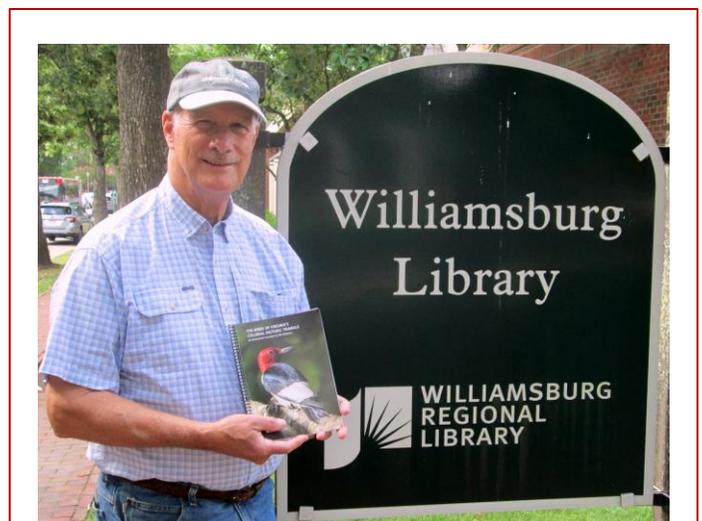
CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT: DECEMBER 14

By Shirley Devan, Count Compiler

The annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is one of the highlights of our bird club's year. Sunday, December 14, 2025, is the date for the WBC's 49th CBC. We had 131 participants in last year's CBC, held just three days before Christmas Day. Many people were out of town, so we hope the earlier date this year will allow more people to join in. Also, if you remember, last year's count day was brutally cold. So, let's cross our fingers for better weather this year.

If you're unfamiliar with the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, click this [link](#) to learn how it got started. Every year the count occurs December 14 through January 5. Since 1901, Christmas Bird Counts in the U.S. and around the world have provided scientists and ornithologists with information to identify trends in bird populations that can only be determined by LONG-term data. That's why it's so important to continue these studies EVERY YEAR. The CBC is an early-winter bird census.

You'll be hearing more from me in the fall about this important citizen science project when I'll be reaching out to recruit volunteers. My message now is to **SAVE THE DATE!** Thank you! 🐦



In early June, Bill Williams donated a copy of his book, The Birds of Virginia's Colonial Historic Triangle: An Annotated Checklist (second edition), on behalf of the Williamsburg Bird Club to the Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL). The title will be added to the Local Authors Project collection at the library. In her letter thanking Bill for the donation, Sandy Towers, WRL director, stated: "Your contribution helps WRL inspire and nurture a vibrant community through exceptional library services." Photo by Benjamin Goldberg, WRL.

A “GOOD SUMMER”

By Katie Forrest

It was a good summer for birds to rear their chicks on our property in Skipwith Farms.

On the porch, Carolina Wrens nested in our potted ‘Henryi’ clematis, which made watering the plant an interesting challenge until they flew off. In the front yard, we had nesting Eastern Bluebirds for the first time in three years, and the two juveniles used our feeders throughout August. We also hosted a young Brown Thrasher and its parents this summer. With their striking yellow eyes, the family of three resembled raptors as they ran around our ferns and quite literally thrashed around in the bird baths. At times, it felt like we were watching scenes from the film *Jurassic Park*.

We were also fortunate to witness move-out day at our chickadee house in May. The first chick was up and off into the treetops within seconds, but its sibling was unconvinced anything nice could be found outside of its cozy wooden home. Mom or Dad tried using our sunflower seeds to lure it out, but the youngster was having none of it. Eventually, after more encouragement and patience, the young Carolina Chickadee took flight. For weeks afterwards, we heard and saw the family of four come and go, and were pleased to know they made their start in our backyard.

Lastly, a big thrill came in July when our juvenile Barred Owl made itself known after months of us hearing its distinct, piercing call from the woods. Though scolded by the crows and songbirds as it sat on a tree branch over our dead hedge, it carried on, both grooming itself and searching for food for nearly twenty minutes. Eventually, something caught its eye on the forest floor and it took flight soundlessly (such a marvel) and disappeared from view. The juvenile

has returned several times, and we still hear our mature Barred Owls call to each other at night, joining the summertime chorus of crickets, frogs, and katydids. 🦉



Katie Forrest captured this photo as the last Carolina Chickadee fledged from the nestbox in her yard on May 8.



Juvenile Barred Owl in Katie Forrest’s yard looking up at crows (out of view) that were sounding the alarm at its presence. Photo by Katie Forrest, July 22.

CELEBRATING THE BARN SWALLOW

By Bill Williams

The Barn Swallow, *Hirundo rustica*, the world’s most widespread swallow species, is the national bird of both Austria and Estonia. In Estonia, it was accorded that status because of an early 1960s campaign conducted by ornithologists, likely members of the Estonian Ornithological Society, whose logo is the Barn Swallow and journal is the *Hirundo*.

The Estonian word for Barn Swallow is “Suitsupääsukese” which, when translated, means Eaves Swallow or Smoke Swallow. According to legend, a Barn Swallow stole fire from the gods to bring it to humans. The infuriated gods attacked the swallow with a firebrand that seared feathers from the middle of its tail and, thus, Barn Swallows have forked tails. Legend also says that anyone who kills a swallow will lose their sight! (Continued on Page 7)

BARN SWALLOWS, Continued from Page 6



Northern Europeans revere Barn Swallows as a symbol of good luck and the harbinger of spring and summer's warmer weather. In Estonian folklore, Barn Swallows nesting in a garden are believed to bring the host family good luck. Further, the country has celebrated this swallow as bird of the year with the Estonian postal service issuing a stamp and other postal materials to commemorate that selection.

The photo shown here was taken this past July in Estonia's 279 mi² Lahemaa National Park, Europe's oldest former Soviet Union national park. The bird was part of several pairs nesting in the superstructure of a three-story observation platform overlooking an ancient bog left behind by glacial retreat. Note the rich white color of this bird's breast and belly, quite the contrast from the warm rusty orange color of our local Barn Swallows.

Lahemaa National Park exemplifies Estonia's 2025 Environmental Performance Index ranking as the cleanest country in the world. The nation is 50% forested, boasts Europe's cleanest fresh water, and has made significant progress transitioning from oil shale to renewable energy sources. Trash of any kind is rarely seen, and Estonia takes a great deal of pride in its recycling programs. 🐦



Barn Swallow, Estonia, July 2025. Photo by Bill Williams.

RECENT SIGHTINGS



Marc Thibault captured the complementary bold yellow colors of an **American Goldfinch** and pansy flowers outside his house in Powhatan Village on June 5.



We can imagine that **Bruce Glendenning** had mixed feelings when he spied this juvenile **Red-shouldered Hawk** in his backyard in Holly Hills on July 27, but Bruce said: "Our feeders were well-vacated by the time the hawk found this perch."

(Recent Sightings continue on Pages 8 and 9)



Barbara Houston shared several wonderful photos from her equally wonderful summer birding adventures in the coastal regions of Virginia and North Carolina (clockwise from upper left): **Roseate Spoonbill**, Monkey Island, NC, June 21; newborn **Brown Pelican** chicks at Smith Island, June 14; newly fledged **Peregrine Falcon** near Smith Island, June 13; day-old **American Oystercatcher** getting its first meal, Chincoteague, July 12; and newborn **Herring Gull** chick near Tangier Island, June 15.



On August 7, **Cindy Walker** captured this photo of her first fall migrant of the year, a **Blue-winged Warbler**, in her backyard in Toano.



Another warbler seen lately in Toano is this **Hooded Warbler**, photographed by **Carol Annis** at her neighborhood pond on August 17.



Jeff Legg shared these photos and the following description of some of his birding activities this summer: "In July I had the opportunity to officiate at a horse show in Kalispell, Montana and stayed some extra days to bird a new area of the country. Using information from the Flathead Audubon Society and eBird, I explored sites such as the Owen Sowerwine Natural Area, Flathead Lake, West Valley Ponds, and numerous parks. New additions to my life list included **Eared Grebe**, **Long-billed Dowitcher** (photo upper left), and **Red-necked Phalarope** (photo upper right) in addition to **Sandhill Crane** and **Black-billed Magpie**. The days for birding were overcast and drizzly so my photos are not the best, but Montana is definitely 'Big Sky Country' and I'm thankful for the opportunity to visit."



Shirley Devan was delighted to hear and be able to capture a photo of a recently fledged **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** on August 11 at York River State Park. Shirley and **Adrienne Frank** first heard the bird vocalizing, "sounding somewhat like a cuckoo, but not quite." Then Adrienne found it hiding in vegetation about head high.



Cindy Sherwood found a juvenile **Little Blue Heron** feeding at Lake Matoaka on August 18. The last time the species was recorded in eBird within the Williamsburg city limits was in 2015.



The **Roseate Spoonbill** hiding in a flock of Great Egrets in Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge on August 12 almost slid by unnoticed, but a second look and a quick photo by a sharp-eyed **Nancy Barnhart** proved worthwhile.



A pair of **Northern Cardinals** were still feeding offspring as of August 15 when **Cindy Sherwood** captured this photo of the adult female and a juvenile in her yard near downtown Williamsburg. At one point, Cindy saw the adult male, who had just fed a juvenile on a branch, nip at the same youngster when it tried to join its father at Cindy's feeder.



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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 5% discount on purchases for WBC members. For your discount in-store, please inform them you are a WBC member during checkout. <https://backyardbirderva.com>



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/>