

Williamsburg Bird Club

October 18, 2023

Hybrid meeting conducted in person at Williamsburg Regional Library auditorium and via Zoom hosted by Ann Carpenter, at 6pm

Attendance: 17 in person; 21 via Zoom

President's Remarks: President Nancy Barnhart welcomed the assembly and those attending via Zoom. She announced that there will be a short business meeting after the presentation.

Program: Patty Maloney, Vice President, Programs introduced this meeting's speaker, Barbara Houston, a local photographer familiar to most watching.

Her presentation, 'Close to Home, *10 places to go and things to shoot close to home!*', at our October meeting included fantastic photos of not only birds, but landscapes and animals.

Barbara, while not working full time for 38 years in accounting at the papermill 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 how to find her favorite birding spots as well as 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 her home in New Kent County.

1. Harrison Lake National Fish Hatchery: a quiet 99-acre lake in Charles City allowing only non-motorized boats featuring a wide variety of habitat, working dam, docks, and walkways. Lovely photos of Kingfishers, Prothonotaries, Spotted Sandpipers, Barn Swallows, Indigo Buntings, and Ovenbirds were among those featured.

2. Shirley Plantation: open active farm fields bordered by wild flowers in Charles City with access via a gravel road through private property so one must 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 3 Sandhill Cranes on nearby Turkey Island Road were among those 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, Kestrels perched on the cannons, and the fields hosting Meadow Larks.

4. Chamberlayne Marsh: a limited viewing area with lots 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: fresh 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, 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. It is a popular breeding place for Clapper Rails, and

she showed pictures of adorable youngsters. Willets, Black-bellied Plovers, Sanderlings, Ruddy Turnstones, Black Skimmers, Marbled Godwit, Royal Terns, Mute Swans, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Semipalmated Plovers, Seaside Sparrows and Merlin 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, Oyster Catchers, Killdeer, and Meadow Larks 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.

Two days after Barbara's presentation, the Washington Post featured her photos of American Flamingos blown in to Chincoteague by Hurricane Idalia in September.

Click on this link to see Barbara's wonderful photos: <https://youtu.be/G0SPj3nZ7sg>

Announcements:

Next Field Trip:

Saturday, October 21: Deborah Humphries will lead our group around the Eastern Shore. Expected stops will include the overlook at the north side of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge, and Kiptopeke State Park, including both the Hawkwatch site and trail. We'll gather at the overlook around 8:30 a.m. Lunch at the Cape Charles Brewing Company will be the final stop. Those interested in carpooling should let George Martin know and meet at the Colony Square Shopping Center shortly after 7:00 a.m. Departure from there will be at 7:15 a.m.

Bird Walks:

Saturday, October 28: Nancy Barnhart will lead our monthly walk at New Quarter Park. Those interested should meet at the parking lot at 8 am. Visitors from the Cape Henry Audubon Society will be our guests.

Next Membership Meeting:

Wednesday, November 15: Nancy reported that it will be held at the Quarterpath Rec Center. It is hoped that by January 2024, we'll have a more permanent place to meet. Rexanne Bruno, the state compiler of the Christmas Bird Count will give a presentation on its history, present status, and how to participate. We'll also hold the election of the WBC Board. The slate of officers was shared in the October issue of *The Flyer*.

Next Field Trip:

Saturday, November 18: Grandview Nature Preserve. We will meet at the entrance at 8am.

The Flyer: Nancy reported that the deadline for submissions to the November newsletter is October 27. This will be the last newsletter of 2023.

Kiptopeke Hawkwatch: Nancy reported that a Rough-legged Hawk was recorded today (10/18) and, also, today, the Kiptopeke Monarch Butterfly biologist tagged the 600th monarch!

Nancy Barnhart adjourned the meeting at 7:10pm

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
October 20, 2023