

**Williamsburg Bird Club**  
**May 15, 2024**

Hybrid meeting conducted in-person at Quarterpath Rec Center, Room 2, Quarterpath Rd, Williamsburg  
and via Zoom hosted by Zoom by Ann Carpenter at 7pm

**Attendance:** 22 in person; 25 via Zoom

**President's Remarks:** Patty Maloney, VP, welcomed everyone present and on Zoom. She noted that the folks who arrived at 6:30 for refreshments and social time were having a good time. Starting with social time seems to be popular. There will be a brief business meeting after her presentation followed by raffles.

**Program- Birding in India:** Patty Maloney, Vice-President, Programs introduced our May speaker, Nancy Barnhart. Nancy was a biology major at Denison University where she was the token ecologist in an otherwise premed department. Her past includes banding songbirds for the Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences and teaching migration. Currently, she is the ornithology instructor in the basic Master Naturalist program; VP of CVWO; spring and autumn monitor at Hawkwatch at College Creek; and, of course, our esteemed president.

Nancy aptly conveyed the thrill of seeing 434 life birds in 3 weeks as she relived with us her tour in India with her husband, Ken, and a small group of other birders in January 2024. The birds were so incredibly colorful, but Nancy and her husband agreed that they were most enchanted by getting to know the country of India: its gracious, welcoming people; countryside; culture (one young guide so accepting of an arranged marriage) and delicious food.

Due to the great variation in regional climate, topography, vegetation, and altitude, India is in the top 10 in the world for number of species of birds, with 81 of the 1377 species being endemic. India is the 7<sup>th</sup> largest country by area, and as of 2023, the most populous in the world. Because of the resulting habitat loss, and pollution from burning wood and dung for heat and cooking, as well as farmers burning their fields after harvesting to prepare for the next planting, many of the birds are near-threatened, endangered, or seriously endangered. Raptors are in the most trouble from forests being cut down and the continued use of DDT. The two areas of India's greatest biodiversity in flora and fauna are the SW part of India around a mountain range called the Western Ghats, and the foothills of the Himalayas to the north. Most of Nancy's tour was divided between these 2 areas.

Nancy stated that she could give separate presentations on just the great variety of woodpeckers and owls they saw. Even Indian doves (Red-collared), pigeons (Orange-breasted Green), and starlings (Malabar) are so colorful! We got to hear the call of the Asian Koel cuckoo that was often their wakeup call at 4 am every day. She described the thrill of seeing a crested male Indian Paradise Flycatcher gliding through the jungle with its stunning white 12 inch long central tailfeathers trailing behind. They were thrilled to see the Indian Pitta, a small bird with a short tail whose Indian name means nine colors. One is never far from water so there are a lot of shore birds and wading birds. They saw the Sarus Crane that at 6 ft is the tallest of all flying birds. Also, the Collared Falconet that at 5 ½ inches (sparrow-size) is one of the smallest raptors in the world. Nancy was thrilled to see a bird that had been on her wish list for years: the Bar-headed Geese that migrate across the Himalayas. She showed us an amazing variety of kingfishers including the White-throated, Crested, funny looking Stork-billed, and the rare Blue-eared Kingfisher. She even discovered that there is a real-life leaf-bird...the Golden-fronted Leafbird!

The group's vehicles often traveled at 10 to 25 mph due to poor roads or cows blocking the way. The sacred cow rules and they were frequently encountered lying on sidewalks and holding up traffic even in big cities like Delhi. A Tiger Safari was included but although they only saw lots of tiger tracks, they did see Indian mongoose, Indian elephants, jackals, wild pigs, fruit bats and a wide variety of monkeys on their travels, as well as the critically endangered gharial, one of the longest crocodiles distinguished by its very long narrow snout. Nancy concluded her presentation with a photo of India's national bird, the Indian peafowl aka peacock, Pavo cristatus.

### **Announcements:**

**Field Trips – George Martin, Field Trip Coordinator:** George expressed concern about the weather for our upcoming field trip at Chippokes Plantation in Surry. He will make a final decision this coming Thursday. Otherwise, we should meet at Jamestown Settlement parking lot to carpool and take the 7:20 am ferry this **Saturday, May 18.**

**Bird Walks – Scott Hemler:** Scott reported our monthly bird walk at New Quarter Park will be **Saturday, May 28.** Folks are to meet at the parking lot at 8am.

**The Flyer:** Nancy reported that Mary Ellen Hodges deadline for submissions of articles/photos is May 28<sup>th</sup>. This will be the last newsletter until September.

**Programs – Patty Maloney, Vice President (Programs).** Patty reported the June meeting will be an outdoor social event held at Chickahominy Riverfront Park where a pavilion has been reserved for **Wednesday, May 26<sup>th</sup>.** Time to be announced. We will also enjoy watching the Purple Martin colony there that our club supports.

**Audubon Portfolio:** Nancy reported that a member has a friend who wants to sell his 1964 edition of an Audubon folio for \$400. If interested, please contact Nancy and she will connect the interested people.

**End of the meeting:** Five free raffles were held and refreshments organized by Catherine Flanagan continued.

Nancy Barnhart adjourned the meeting at 8:12 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club  
May 19, 2024