

Williamsburg Bird Club

February 18, 2026

Hybrid Meeting: conducted in person at Quarterpath Rec Center, Room2, 202 Quarterpath Rd, Williamsburg and via Zoom hosted by Ann Carpenter, at 6 :30 pm

Attendance: 24 via Zoom and 29 in person.

Presentation: Rexanne Bruno, VP Programs, introduced our speaker, Sergio Harding, who told us about the second Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas (VBBA2). Sergio Harding received a master's degree in biology studying endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers in NC. Since 2005, he has worked as a non-game-bird conservation biologist with the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), where he oversees various avian projects. He described the VBBA2 as a one-stop-birding-site available to the public for free that covers comprehensive information of 203 species that breed in Virginia. The Atlas represents one of Virginia's largest citizen science efforts, and the result of collaboration between DWR, Virginia Society of Ornithology, and Virginia Tech's Management Institute. 500 volunteers contributed over 80,000 hours of field observations to map breeding evidence across the state. Sergio thanked those volunteers from our club attending the meeting and for the money donated by our club. He applauded Bill Williams, who chaired the steering committee; Shirley Devan, who led the VSO fund raising campaign; and Rexanne Bruno, who served on every Atlas committee from beginning to end!

Data was collected from 2016 - 2020, and data analysis/publication of results from 2021- 2025. The data is compared to the first VBBA conducted from 1985 – 1989. Two big takeaways from the comparison revealed new breeding species in Virginia since the 1st Atlas: Anhinga, Common Merganser, Mississippi Kite, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Black-necked Stilt, Trumpeter Swan, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Painted Bunting, and Merlin. And the breeding species 'lost' (might not have been spotted) since the 1st Atlas: Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Upland Sandpiper, Bewick's Wren, Sedge Wren, Bachman's Sparrow, and Ring-necked Pheasant. The data tells when birds are establishing territories, building nests, laying eggs, fledging chicks, as well as their distribution in different habitats throughout Virginia.

Sergio gave us a tour of the on-line VABBA2 site, scrolling through the website's ribbon banner at the top that highlighted the information categories: About, Species Accounts, Methods and Results, and Conversation. A pulldown from each category reveals more data-rich info that includes beautiful photos, species info, interactive maps, and analysis of changes in breeding status. The Atlas continues to be developed to include further info, such as, tables showing the timing of breeding behavior across species, and a Research and Education Page.

With an estimated 2.9 billion birds lost from North America since 1970, understanding where birds breed and how their populations are changing in response to climate change and other anthropogenic causes has never been more important. The Atlas provides critical information for habitat management, land acquisition, education and outreach, research and monitoring, and conservation planning.

Announcements:

Liaison to CDR – Gary Carpenter: Gary requested volunteers to help him put up bird feeders at CDR's new location when they are ready.

Field Trips – George Martin: Rexanne speaking for George reported the following field trips:

Saturday, February 21: Yorktown Colonial Parkway with Rexanne as leader. Group will meet at Marquis Pkwy. Target parking lot.

Saturday, March 21: Machicomoco State Park with Deborah Humphries leading.

Bird Walks- Scott Hemler: Speaking for Scott, Rexanne reported that the monthly NQP walk will be held on Feb 28 at 8am.

Re-Tree JCC: Jeanne Millin brought to our attention that James City County is planning to plant 100,000 trees over the next 10 years. They are asking for community participation and input on what types of native trees to prioritize. They have already bought and planted 1,000 red maple and redbud saplings.

End of Meeting: A free raffle was held and refreshment enjoyed.

Rexanne Bruno adjourned the meeting at 7:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Millar, Secretary Williamsburg Bird Club
February 22, 2026