



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

**Hampton Roads Bird Club**

[www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.com](http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.com)

Vol. 56, No. 4

March / April 2008

## **March 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting—7:00 PM "Australia: The Birds Down Under"**

Join us for an exciting evening with **Teta Kain**, who will share her experiences birding in Australia. Teta is a past president of HRBC, as well as Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO). A native of Maine, Teta and her husband retired in Hampton after many years in the Air Force. She now stays busy at her Gloucester home on Caffee Creek and takes care of Dragon Run as well, keeping it alive and running. Teta leads field trips, compiles records of years of Virginia Christmas Audubon counts and rare Virginia birds. Please come out and welcome Teta back to speak at our club!

**Hostesses: Gail Claydon and Hilary Propst**

## **April 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting—7:00 PM "The Great Dismal Swamp"**

**Stephen Living** will speak to us on birds and wildlife in the Great Dismal Swamp, as well as the upcoming festival there in May. He'll also update us on the nesting pair of Bald Eagles at Norfolk Botanical Gardens. Steve is a wildlife biologist with the Watchable Wildlife program of VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). He has worked as a consulting biologist for habitat restoration, designing habitats for both wild and managed settings. Steve is an avid birder and naturalist who enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and young son. We know you'll enjoy Steve's informative presentation!

**Hostesses: Karrin Frankie, Mary Kurowski and Sandy McCollam**

### **March Field Trips**

**MAR. 2 & 16 (Sunday) ~ 7:00-9:00 AM**  
**Regular bird walk in Newport News Park**  
Meet at Ranger Station parking lot.  
Trip Leader: Jane Frigo, 873-0721

### **MAR. 15 (Sat.), 8:00 AM – Colonial Parkway**

For our March field trip, we will travel up the Colonial Parkway from Yorktown to Jamestown. Meet at 8:00 AM at the Yorktown Visitors Center and Park Headquarters. There are several wonderful pull-offs that give great access to views of the York River and the James River. Target species include Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Red-headed Woodpecker and Nuthatches. This trip will involve traveling by car to frequent pull-off stops. Walking will be minimal. Bring car walkie-talkies if you have them, along with snack/lunch. Trip leaders are Lee and Meredith Bell. Sign up at the March meeting, or call Jane Frigo (873-0721) to let her know you're coming.

### **April Field Trips**

**APR. 6 & 20 (Sunday) ~ 7:00-9:00 AM**  
**Regular bird walk in Newport News Park**  
Meet at Ranger Station parking lot.  
Trip Leader: Jane Frigo, 873-0721

### **APR. 12 (Sat.), 8:00 AM – Great Dismal Swamp**

Our April field trip will take us to the Great Dismal Swamp, with veteran wildlife biologist Don Schwab as our trip leader. Meet at the Jericho Ditch parking lot at 8:00 AM. This will be a walking trip along the Jericho Ditch and possibly including a drive to the Washington Ditch and boardwalk stroll there. Directions: Take the James River Bridge Route 17 South, and turn right on Bennett's Pasture Road (627). When it ends, turn right on Nansemond Parkway (337), then left on White Marsh Rd (642). Turn left onto Jericho Ditch Lane (a gravel road) and proceed to the parking lot. Bring lunch or snack. Sign up at the April meeting, or call Jane Frigo (873-0721) to let her know you're coming.

## The President's Perch

*Meredith Bell*

With full-time warm weather imminent, we can begin looking forward to the arrival of our beloved songbirds. Recently I've been brushing up on their songs and calls. In case you don't have these CDs, I recommend two sets that many of members use to learn and review bird songs.

- *Birding By Ear* and *More Birding By Ear*, (Eastern/Central) by Richard K. Walton and Robert W. Lawson
- *Stokes Field Guide to Bird Songs* by Lang Elliott, with Donald and Lillian Stokes

You can get them at our two local bird stores: Wild Wings Nature Store in Hidenwood Shopping Center and Wild Birds Unlimited in Village Shops at Kiln Creek.

We have many birding activities scheduled for Club members this spring. Being familiar with individual songs will enhance your birding experience!

**Nominating Committee:** Thanks to Mike Propst, Barbara Hudgins and John Dawson for agreeing to serve on the Nominating Committee. During March they'll prepare a slate of officers for 2008-09 to present at the April meeting.

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### April 5 – Fort Eustis Bird Count

Thanks to Tim Christensen for arranging a first-time-ever bird count at Ft. Eustis! As part of the Fort Eustis Earth Day celebration, HRBC members and guests are invited there for some great bird watching opportunities on April 5<sup>th</sup>. If you'd like to participate, **contact Ms. Emma Thomas at 878-4123 ext. 308 by March 27<sup>th</sup>**. Start time will be 8:00 AM and we'll finish around noon. There will be some walking, particularly on the Fort Eustis Nature Trail, so be sure to dress appropriately for the weather. Ms. Thomas will provide directions and additional information. Species recorded will enhance the installation's biological database. All participants should come to the Main Gate at Fort Eustis Blvd and must have photo identification. For those driving, be sure to have drivers license, vehicle registration and proof of insurance.

## April 26 - Spring Bird Count

Mark your calendar for our annual Spring Bird Count on April 26<sup>th</sup>. This count covers the same territory as the winter Audubon Christmas Count but is not an Audubon event. Compiler Hayes Williams will assign sectors and tally results. He'll distribute the sector folders to the team leaders at the April meeting.

These counts are always fun and have the added excitement of the migrating birds to challenge us. We welcome experienced and new birders alike, as this is a great chance to see and learn about new species!

To participate, contact Hayes at 804-693-4417 or joycewms@inna.net.

### Audubon Christmas Bird Count Report *Hayes Williams*

The "Newport News" CBC was held by HRBC on December 15, 2007, with 45 persons participating. The count area takes in most of Newport News, Hampton, Poquoson and a good part of York County. The temperature ranged from 32 to 44 degrees and the wind was from the northeast at 10 to 17 mph. The total number of individual birds was 28,080, which is about average for recent years. Eight species reached a higher number than in any previous year:

- Snow Goose 30 (20 in 2005)
- Great Egret 72 (67 in 2004)
- Bald Eagle 16 (11 in 2005)
- Lesser Yellowlegs 12 (6 in 2002)
- Tree Swallow 1002 (3 in 1964)
- Eastern Bluebird 140 (103 in 2002)
- American Robin 1937 (1075 in 2005)
- Cedar Waxwing 230 (205 in 1971)

Four groups were very low. They were ducks, gulls, woodpeckers and sparrows. Rarities were:

- Eurasian Wigeon 1 (second year reported)
- Common Eider 2 (1 reported in 1979)
- Rusty Blackbird 3 (200 in 1966)
- Baltimore Oriole 1 (1 in 2004)

Totals of all species and other data are available online at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/)

Click on "current year's results." In option A, select "Virginia," then click on "find count." Scroll down and click on "Newport News (VANN)." Then click on "make a table." You can then scroll down through all the data of our count.

## Field Trip Reports

*Jane Frigo*

**JAN. 12, 2008.** Twenty-six members of the Club ventured onto the **Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands**. Joyce and Hayes Williams led one group, and Ben and Mary Copeland led another group. Thanks to each of them for their leadership and expertise. The Harlequin males were seen at length—so beautiful. Also, groups of Long-tailed Ducks were cooperative. Northern Gannets were abundant as were Gulls, and Walt Livant got a great picture of a Bonaparte's Gull. A Harbor Seal was even seen. The day was beautiful and didn't end with our island-hopping. The group continued on to the Eastern Shore with stops at the Eastern Shore National Refuge, the Cheriton landfill, Oyster, and a slow drive down Rt. 600 ending at Magotha Road. The trip lasted all day and was well worth every minute.

**FEB. 23, 2008.** Our field trip to **Greensprings Trail** began at 8 AM under cloudy, calm skies and cool, damp temperatures. Lee and Meredith Bell, Cathy Bond, Julie Breeden, Libby Carmine, Ben and Mary Copeland, Nick Flanders, Jane Frigo, Nancy Gruttman-Tyler, George and Rosemarie Harris, Barbara and Richard Hudgins, and Walter Livant met in the Jamestown High School parking lot where we saw Eastern Bluebirds, House Finches, Killdeer, and Ring-billed Gulls. The Nature Trail was quite productive, with a total of 47 species recorded. Some highlights included five Green-winged Teal, a fly-over group of 23 Snow Geese, an Osprey, Rusty Blackbirds in abundance, a long, close look at a Winter Wren, and best of all, a Great Horned Owl.



Julie Breeden used her digital camera with Lee Bell's scope to take this photo of the owl.

## Newport News Park Reports

*Jane Frigo*

**FEB. 3, 2008.** We had a very productive walk, which lasted until 11 AM. It was a beautiful day with cool weather and no wind. We had a great turnout of 14 participants: Fred Blystone, Cathy Bond, Ben Copeland, Diane and Nicolas Ferree, Nick Flanders, Jane Frigo, Jim Harrison, Richard Hudgins, Ann McDonald, Marc Nichols, Eileen O'Toole, Mel Pettard, and John Porter.

We totaled 60 species with a couple of exciting sightings. We had a Fox Sparrow that we saw high in a tree at the first bridge. Seeing him so high up in the tree was unusual and to hear him sing was also a treat. Then at the Arboretum we found a Great Horned Owl. Several photographers had reported seeing him there but to date our group had not found him, until today. The owl gave us all a great show. In fact, we think there were two and probably a nest close by. It will be worth watching this spring. The pine tree is near the road just before the Japanese tea house and pond. Finally, we got to see an immature Eagle go after a Great Blue Heron while over the lake near the Spawning Pond.

**FEB. 17, 2008.** The weather was variably cloudy and cool, and there was a slight wind. Fred Blystone, Julie Breeden, Nancy Gruttman-Tyler, Richard and Barbara Hudgins, Marc Nichols, Eileen O'Toole, and Mel Pettard and his daughter Robin (who was visiting from Oregon) met me for our regular park walk. We were all hoping to see a repeat visit from the Great Horned Owls of the last walk, but no luck. We had great views of both Kinglets and all three Nuthatches. All totaled we saw 44 species. At the end of the walk we ran into photographer and HRBC member Ken Sheide, who had walked beyond the Swamp Bridge and picked up a few other species.

### Other Upcoming Events

**May 10-11** – Great Dismal Swamp Festival

Get details:

[www.virginia.org/site/description.asp?attrID=44501](http://www.virginia.org/site/description.asp?attrID=44501)

**May 16-18** – VSO Annual Meeting and Mountain Lake Birding Festival – Pearisburg, VA

Get details: [www.mountainlakebirding.com](http://www.mountainlakebirding.com)

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To join the Hampton Roads Bird Club, please fill out the form below and bring it along with your check to the next meeting or mail to: **HRBC Treasurer – 19 Hertzler Road, Newport News, VA 23602-6125.**

Membership is from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.** NOTE: Membership dues can be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in Hidenwood Shopping Center, Newport News, VA, or at Wild Birds Unlimited in the Village Shops at Kiln Creek, York County.

Meetings are held at the Sandy Bottom Nature Park, 1255 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA, on the second Thursday of the month, September through May, at 7:00 PM.

Check out the latest news and photos for the Club at: [www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org](http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org)

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### Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday (month-day): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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