



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org

Vol. 59, No. 4

March / April 2011

March 10th Meeting—7:00 PM

“Birds of the Mid-Atlantic.”

Bob Schamerhorn, a graphic designer and photographer based in Richmond will be our guest speaker in March.

His program is packed full of beautiful avian images of the Mid-Atlantic region, from the mountains to the coast, from spring to winter. Show is accompanied by stories, information and experiences of where and how these photos were taken. Highly informative and a great program for any viewer, from novice to experienced. Enjoy stunning bird photographs, presented by a life-long birder. See more photos at his website: www.iphotobirds.com.

April 14th, Meeting—7:00 PM



Speaker for April will be announced later.

March Field Trips

March 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

MAR. 12 (Sat.), 8:00 AM – Great Dismal Swamp
Our March field trip will take us to the Great Dismal Swamp. Meet at the Washington Ditch parking lot at 8:00 AM. This will be a walking trip along the Washington Ditch and boardwalk. We may also drive to Jericho or Railroad Ditch and see what we can find there. Directions: Take I-664 across the James River and take the Suffolk exit for Rt. 460, 58 & 13. Stay in the right lane and head toward downtown Suffolk. Turn left on E. Washington St (Rt. 337), and then left on White Marsh Rd (Rt. 642). Travel approximately 5 miles and turn left onto Washington Ditch Lane and proceed to the parking lot. Bring lunch or snack. Sign up at the March meeting, or call Dave Youker at 344-9385 to let him know you're coming.

April Field Trips

April 3 & 17, 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. 16 (Sat.), 8:00 AM – Blackwater Ecological Preserve
Our April field trip will take us to the Blackwater Ecological Preserve which is managed by ODU. We will meet at the entrance to the preserve at 8:00 AM before going through the locked gate. Directions: Take I-664 across the James River and take the Suffolk exit for Rt. 460, 58 & 13. Stay in the left lanes and continue on US 460 until you cross the Nansemond River, and then take the second exit right (north) which is still 460. Go north 8.9 miles to US 258 and turn left (there is a Dairy Queen at this corner); go 0.6 miles south to SR 603 and turn right. Stay on SR 603 for 6.3 miles to the junction of SR 614 (Thomas Woods Trail) and turn right. The preserve is 0.6 miles on the left; look for the "ODU blue" steel posts. Bring lunch or snack. Sign up at the April meeting, or call Dave Youker at 344-9385 to let him know you're coming.

Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program 2010 Update—David Bryan

During this past year, the Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program of the National Audubon Society has been busy in forwarding our mission of engaging people for bird conservation in the Commonwealth's most critical habitats for breeding, migrating and wintering birds. The following are some exciting highlights of this past year's events and accomplishments:

- Helped to protect the 125 acre Blair's Wharf in the James River National Wildlife Refuge located within the Lower James River IBA
- Coordinated and conducted the first survey of the Central Piedmont IBA, focusing on the protected areas
- Expanded our Adopt-an-IBA Program to include eight bird conservation groups throughout Virginia
- Partnered with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to train birders from 5 Audubon Chapters and the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory to identify and report *Phragmites* invasions throughout Virginia using an online conservation tool called LandScope – the valuable information collected will help DCR staff to ground-truth their own data and identify new stands of *Phragmites* to eliminate, thus preserving natural marsh habitats
- Began a partnership with the Virginia Living Museum to conduct five TogetherGreen volunteer events, thus raising awareness for Audubon and bird habitat conservation
- Worked with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to monitor coveys of Northern Bobwhite quail, a declining species of Global Conservation Concern
- With partners at Richmond Audubon Society and Virginia Commonwealth University we have initiated a project called Team Warbler, an international alliance between the research and school communities of Richmond and Panama City that will engage academic communities at the college, elementary and middle school levels. Team Warbler focuses on the breeding and wintering habitat of the Prothonotary Warbler.

From the Powell and Stone Mountains IBA in the southwest to the Barrier Island Lagoon System IBA on the Eastern Shore, Virginia's 20 IBAs all face a large variety of threats and challenges. We would thus like to extend thanks to our donors, volunteers, adoption groups and to our public, private and non-profit partners in conservation for their help and support in furthering our mutual mission for bird conservation throughout the Commonwealth. We could not do it without you and thus ask for your continued support heading into 2011. Thank you!

Go Out on a Limb By Mary Copeland

Bird identification is inherently imperfect in two major ways. The first has to do with the observer. Our eyes and ears are imperfect and our minds even more so. Our judgments are not foolproof, and our logic is not infallible. The second problem has to do with the thing observed. Birds do not always fit into tidy categories, regardless of the expertise or inclinations of the observer.

Bird identification should be liberating, not demoralizing. We should try to identify every bird. Don't worry about what the experts—whoever they are—might think. Make a guess, and say it out loud. Be keenly alert to the reality that your judgments might be wrong and your eyes and ears faulty, but be equally aware of the possibility that your insights might be valid and your intuition well-founded. Put a name on every bird. Then go back and assess a level of probability—"possibly" or "probably," "likely" or "very likely."

Refer to your field guide to study the bird and stay close to a fellow birder with more experience in answering your questions.

VSO News

The annual meeting of the Virginia Society of Ornithology will be held May 13 – 15 in Harrisonburg, VA. The registration deadline is May 1, 2011. Direct questions to Elizabeth Ihle, 540-234-8296 or eliza51@aol.com.

Upcoming VSO Field Trips (www.virginiabirds.net)
– Piney Grove Field Trip - May 28
– New River Valley (Blacksburg, VA) - June 17-19

Upcoming Events

April 17th—Earth Day at Newport News Park. 1-4pm.

May 7th—Spring Bird Count
Contact Clark White at cwbirds@cox.net or 757-875-7649 if you would like to participate

Nominating Committee

Now is your chance to get more involved in the club. If you would like to serve as an officer in the club, please contact Richard Hudgins at 757-596-9603.

Great Blue Heron Rookery Tours

By David Bryan

Spring is almost here and the evidence is abundant all across the Commonwealth of Virginia's Important Bird Areas. Here in Richmond, our local Great Blue Heron Rookery at the James River Park Pipeline Walk is bustling with activity as Herons are currently establishing territory, courting and nest building. This Rookery, located just south of the heart of the city, was recently featured in the Richmond Times Dispatch:

<http://www2.timesdispatch.com/news/news/2011/feb/28/TDMAIN01-birds-buds-beginnings-ar-871834/>.

If you have not had a chance to visit the Rookery yet, please come to one of our upcoming Rookery tours on March 12th or 26th. The biweekly tours, which start at 10:00 AM and run through noon, are hosted by Ralph White, the entertaining James River Parks System Manager, as well as expert birders from the National Audubon Society and Richmond Audubon Society. The cost is \$5 per person to benefit the Park System and Audubon. Please come and enjoy this amazing natural wonder in the midst of the City of Richmond. Don't forget your binoculars!

Also, visit a new website solely dedicated to the Richmond Rookery: <http://varookery.audubon.org>. Please visit the site often for updated pictures, event information, and weekly videos highlighting the continual changes of the Rookery, as well as interviews with experts.

Walk in the Forest

By Shirley Devan

As part of the free "Walk in the Forest" event sponsored by the VA Department of Forestry, there will be a guided Bird Walk at 7 am at the New Kent Forestry Center in Providence Forge, VA. Follow the signs to the Grading Building where we'll convene for the Bird Walk. The "Walk" could include driving along the field roads to look for hawks, kestrels, meadowlarks, etc.

Susan Powell, member of the Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) and the VSO, will lead the walk and I will assist.

New Kent Forestry Center is not usually open to the public, but visitors will be welcome all day March 19 for a variety of events, starting at 7 am. See the full schedule below. Plus, take home free trees!

Here's a link to the flyer describing the event:

http://www.dof.virginia.gov/info/resources/2011-03-19_WalkinForest_Flyer.pdf

List of Events:

7:00 am Guided Birding Trip (led by WBC)

10:00 am Guided Nature Hike (also at 12 and 2 pm)

11:00 am Exhibits Open and Free Seedlings Available

Noon Planting Demonstration near Education Center

Take home up to three seedlings per family. Pin oak, bald cypress, persimmon, river birch, and white oak will be available.

Hiking trails open at 7 a.m. and maps will be provided.

Bring a picnic lunch and enjoy the day. There is no cost to participate in this event!

Field Trip Reports

By Dave Youker

Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Field Trip

We conducted our annual field trip to the CBBT islands on January 15th. Twenty-one HRBC members visited all 3 islands of the CBBT and then continued on to the eastern shore for some more birding. Highlights of the islands were all 3 Scoters, both Scaup, and Northern Gannets. Additionally, on island 3, there were 18 harbor seals basking on the rocks. On the Eastern Shore, we came across a Eurasian Wigeon, Northern Pintail and American Woodcock. A field of snow geese estimated conservatively around 500 contained 2 dark morph geese, and a flock of around 60 Canada geese contained 1 cackling goose. We tallied a total of 68 species for the day.

Mathews County Field Trip

On February 19th, we conducted our monthly field trip to Mathews County. The trip started at New Point Comfort, and continued on to New Point Wharf, Horn Harbor Landing, Winter Harbor Landing, Bethel Beach, and ended with North and South Haven Beaches. HRBC members included Lee and Meredith Bell, John and Marilyn Adair, Richard Hudgins, and Dave Youker. The weather was warm, but there was a steady breeze that kept many song birds from making an appearance. Total species count for the day was a respectable 48 given the conditions. Highlights included both Common and Red-throated Loons, Horned Grebes, American Oystercatchers, Bonaparte's gulls, and large numbers of Turkey Vultures.

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To join the Hampton Roads Bird Club, please fill out the form below and bring it along with your check (payable to Hampton Roads Bird Club) to the next meeting or mail to: **Richard Hudgins, 803 Riverside Drive, Newport News, VA 23606-3629.**

Membership is from July 1st to June 30th. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.**

NOTE: Membership dues can also be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in the Hidenwood Shopping Center, Newport News, VA.

Meetings are held in the conference room 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.

Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

Renewal _____ New Member _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Birthday (month-day): _____

Email: _____

Check this box to receive newsletter via email/website instead of hard copy by mail.

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