



Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

Hampton Roads Bird Club

www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org

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January/February 2014

**January 16th Meeting–
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Mark Smithson**

"Breeding Bird Nesting Results"

Mark Smithson is a graduate of the College of William & Mary. During the summer of 2013, Mark conducted breeding bird studies at three Hampton Roads areas: Craney Island, Grandview Beach and the south island of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel. The results of his studies will emphasize Least Terns, Common Terns and Royal Terns, but data on other breeders will also be presented.

Hosted by Brenda Gervais, Rock Moeslein, and Gwen Harris

**February 13th Meeting–
6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program
Sergio Harding**

"Breeding Bird Surveys in Virginia"

Sergio Harding is the Nongame Bird Conservation Biologist for the Wildlife Diversity Division of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF). He coordinates the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) in Virginia and participates in many of the DGIF's bird survey and monitoring programs.

Hosted by Angie Herring and Virginia Boyles

Bird Watching Excursions

Regular Bird Walks in Newport News Park

The first and third Sunday of each month
Jan 5 & 19, Feb 2 & 16, Mar 2 & 16 7:00-9:00 AM
Meet at parking lot 100m behind Ranger Station
Trip Leader: Jane Frigo (757-873-0721)

Monthly Field Trips

September through May
Contact TomCharlock@gmail.com (757-599-3418)

January 11 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel Islands
It happened. See next Newsletter for full report.

February 15 (Saturday) 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Fisherman's Island and Kiptopeke State Park
See page 2 and 3.

March 15 (Saturday) 7:00 AM -2:00 PM
Dutch Gap Conservation Area
See page 3.

The President's Perch

By Dave Youker

It's that time of year again – New Year's Resolutions. What do you want to do differently in 2014 regarding your Club and your birding experience? Last year I suggested keeping a yearly bird list, if you've never done that before. It will make this time of year very exciting as your list quickly grows. Another thing to consider is getting more involved in your Club's operations. Many of our projects could use your help. From bluebird trail monitoring to the feeder program to our adopted IBA, all these efforts could benefit from your assistance. Also consider one of our board positions. The nominating committee will be formed soon to consider candidates for next year. Even if you're not a board member, consider volunteering to be on one of the various committees that help make our Club what it is. You can help decide the future activities of our Club. This time of year is special for another reason. It means it's time for those northern species to pay us a visit. It's usually only a brief time we get the opportunity to see these species. So, pay special attention to your feeders and take the opportunity to do some winter birding.

Club's Holiday Party on December 12 It Still Warms Us



Photo by Becky Rose

About 50 of us gathered at Sandy Bottom at 6:30 PM on Thursday evening, December 12, for the annual Hampton Roads Bird Club Holiday Party. While Thanksgiving fell during the previous month, thanks for this occasion should be generously bestowed upon the organizers, Dot Silsby, Brenda Gervais, Phyllis Roth, and Virginia Boyles. Dot, our Senior Birder, organized and served at the appetizer table.



Photo by Becky Rose

After we sat down and feasted, Phyllis appeared as Mistress of Ceremonies with a novel bird quiz game that had been researched and printed by Brenda. Game questions struck at tables successively, and when the occupants of one table were much engrossed in their enjoyment of a fine ham that Gwen Harris had brought, the adults were tongued-tied for an answer. But fortunately the young Ned

Rose was there to supply illuminating answers, sating the MC. Faster eaters at other tables, having had more time to think, mustered clever answers, too. There were a few light formalities during the evening. Nancy Gruttman-Tyler, who leads our Club's contribution to the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, briefed us on essentials for that event (it was two days hence, December 14). Dot presented an award to Meredith and Lee Bell for their service to the Virginia Society of Ornithology. It was a warm and pleasant sit-down dinner with friends, and that's hard to beat.



Photo by Becky Rose

Field Trip to Fisherman's Island and Kiptopeke State Park Saturday, 7:45 AM Feb. 15, 2014

A field trip featuring a special destination, Fisherman's Island at the north terminus of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel (CBBT), will begin at 7:45 AM, on Saturday, February, 2014. Fisherman's Island is normally closed to amateur birders, but we have reserved a no-fee escorted tour; and then plan to visit Kiptopeke. We'll meet at 7:45 AM in the parking lot just before the toll plaza at the south entrance to the CBBT, quickly form car pools, and then proceed to the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge (ESVNWR) for an 8:30 AM briefing by our guide. After driving to and walking about Fisherman's Island, noon will see us heading northward again on Route 13 for more birding at Kiptopeke State Park. Club members are advised to pack snacks and lunches. If the weather is good, this is likely to be an all-day trip.

(Field Trip to Fishermans's Island continued)

Directions to the 7:45 AM, Saturday, February 15, meeting point:

Take I64 East and exit 282 to merge onto US-13 N/Northampton Blvd toward CBBT. Before you cross the toll booth heading northwards, turn to the right for a parking lot near a CBBT official building. Our car pools will form there. The official building has restrooms. There are no restrooms on Fisherman's Island, where we will stay for 2-3 hours. Kiptopeke State Park has restrooms, as does CBBT Island One and the CBBT facilities on US-13N just opposite the toll booths at the northern end.

If you wish to attend this event, please contact Tom Charlock by email (TomCharlock@gmail.com), phone (757-599-3418) or sign up at the meeting.

Field Trip to Dutch Gap

Saturday, 7:00 AM March 15, 2014

The car pool for our Saturday, March 15 field trip to the Dutch Gap Conservation Area in Chester, Virginia will form at 7:00 AM in the parking lot behind the Ranger Station in Newport News Park. The drive from the Park to Dutch Gap is about an hour. Dutch Gap Conservation Area is an odd artifact of humanity's impact on nature. The Yankees had it dug out during the Civil War to divert the James



River and thus threaten nearby Richmond; and the great diversion loop was left in place. A power generation plant has also made a conspicuous footprint. Extensive efforts at environmental mitigation by

Dominion Virginia Power have panned out and left us with a 3.5 mile trail, a tidal lagoon, and islands with first class birding. This trip will run until midafternoon, so bring your lunch.

If you wish to attend this event, please Tom Charlock by email (TomCharlock@gmail.com), phone (757-599-3418), or sign up at the meeting.

Installation of Osprey Nest Boxes at Sandy Bottom

by John Adair

Last summer, the Sandy Bottom Nature Park approached Dave Youker and asked if the Hampton Roads Bird Club would like to install two Osprey nest boxes in their recently completed wetlands reclamation area. After estimating costs for poles, power auger, and other logistics required, Dave discussed the plan with the club members who supported the effort.

In November as the plan was coming together, John Adair contacted Dominion Virginia Power to see if they could assist in the effort. Several calls and referrals later, John spoke with Kim Lowers, Engineering Manager for the Hampton/Newport News/Williamsburg area, and she agreed to provide two poles and installation support for the project. Dave notified Ranger Robert Waugh of the plan, and the two designed and built two Osprey nest platforms for the project.



*John and George Helping Load the Osprey Nest Platform
(photo by George Boyles)*

The planned mid-December installation was postponed twice due to the ice storms in the northeast which required Dominion Virginia Power manpower. Dave continued to monitor the moving date which was finally set for January 8, 2014. Dave notified John Adair and George and Virginia Boyles of the plan and asked them to participate, as Dave had a long planned trip to Arizona, California and Nevada scheduled to depart the very day of the installation.

(Osprey Nest Box Installation continued)

On Wednesday, January 8, Lead Engineer Joe Pierce from Dominion Virginia Power arrived at Sandy Bottom at 8:30AM with several heavy vehicles and a team of 8. George and John helped load the nest platforms onto the park ranger's truck and lead the installation team convoy to the initial pole site. The team presented a safety instruction briefing and began the orchestration of activities to lift a pole from the hauler, transport the pole to the open field, install the Osprey nest platform, auger the hole, lift the pole and insert it into the hole, and secure it in place using 2-part pole setting foam.



The Second Osprey Nest Box (photo by George Boyles)



Installation of the First Osprey Nest (photo by George Boyles)

The team then moved to the next location, repeated the operation, and finished at 1:30PM. Virginia's chocolate chip cookies were a morning welcome sight for the team and Kim Lowers provided hamburgers, hotdogs, fries and dessert as the work ended.

This was truly a team effort by the Hampton Roads Bird Club, Sandy Bottom Nature Park, and the Dominion Virginia Power without whose help we could not have accomplished such an outstanding result.



Le Tanas (Fishing falcon) from George-Louis Leclere, Comptes de Buffon's (1707-1788) Histoire naturelle

Clean-up: Grandview Beach Western Shore Marshes IBA(11/09/13)

By Dave Youker

On November 9, 2013, 17 people traveled to Grandview Beach to conduct a survey and clean-up of this southern most end of our Western Shore Marshes Important Bird Area (IBA). The group consisted of members from our club, Williamsburg Bird Club, master naturalists, and volunteers through the Hampton Clean City Commission which consisted mainly of Bay Days volunteers. The weather conditions were outstanding, and we tallied 40 different species for the day. After surveying for 2 hours, we began our litter removal and collected numerous bags of litter from the beach. At the end of the event, Will Moore from Bay Days provided coffee and donuts, which was much appreciated by all.

Pictured below, Front row (left to right): Shirley Devan, Carla Weimer, Allison Weimer, Virginia Boyles, Jane Frigo. Second row: Joanne Ross, Bill Boeh, Anne Boeh, Cheryl Jacobson, Les Lawrence, Dave Youker.



Photo by Jack Daw Recon.

Report of Field Trip to Grandview Beach and Fort Monroe (11/10/13)

By Jack Daw

On November 10, 2013, 11 birders participated in a field trip to a pair of valued local sites, Grandview Beach and Fort Monroe. Surprisingly, we observed only 34 species in a five-hour session. What happened? It wasn't the tide: We'd arrived at 7:00 AM, with plenty of time to spare for catching low water at 8:30 AM. Was the weather off? Nope. Skies were fair with light northerly winds. Temperatures ran from the mid 40s to the mid 60s, almost 10 degrees warmer than the previous day. Could the low species count be explained by an altered beach environment? Aha.

Records show that on the previous morning, a volunteer Important Birding Area (IBA) clean-up crew had indeed tromped over the sands. Intelligence materials available to HRBC reveal two key facts about the IBA gang. First, they had the nerve to observe more species than we did. Second, after birding they physically removed great quantities of commercial fishing debris from the beach. Said debris are a known avian food source, and one readily deduces that the resulting lack of eatables caused birds to subsequently vacate the area, thus explaining our low species count the next day. Are such tricks consistent with ethical birding standards? Even for a highly competitive Big Year? No. Who led the IBA gang? Intelligence gathering is rough business; even our own government is not entirely competent in such matters (i.e., it often fails to check even obvious sources for information). Clues as to the identity of the IBA suspects should be sent to the field trip coordinator. "Amnesty" is not part of his vocabulary.



Genuine HRBC Field Trip of November 1

(Jack Daw's rant on 11/09/13 and 11/10/13 continued)

Enough of humor. Back to the real November 10 HRBC field trip. A photo of most of our birders (not that laudable, and equally august, IBA clean-up crew) is found on the bottom right of the previous page. From left to right, they are the Quirion family (Melinda, Spencer and Myles), Virginia Boyles, Sandy DiCarlo, Tracy Tate, John Adair, Angie Herring, Laura Slaughter, and John Lowry. At Grandview, we covered almost the same track as did the IBA gang, hiking NNE on the shore to the rocks (where the beach next veers to the NNW) and then returning. Their trash pickup was thorough. On the beach we saw only plenty of shells, a few stones, welk egg cases (identified by Angie Herring) – and happily for us - also Sanderling, Dunlin, and Black-bellied Plover. Mike Lowry and Virginia Boyles used telescopes to sort out the Surf Scoter from Black Scoter over the waters of the Bay.

Most of the party then drove to Fort Monroe, where we strolled the high ramparts on the Norfolk side. There we enjoyed looking *down* on Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in the trees within the Fort. Walking back towards the renovated Chamberlin building along the seawall, Laura Slaughter provided some of us with a lesson on the fine points of distinguishing the Herring, Ring-billed, Laughing, and Bonaparte's Gulls. At a modest length of 13.5 inches, Bonaparte's Gull is the smallest of the group; and the least common for our locale. The clincher field marks were the black bill and the behind-the-ear dark spot on the adult, non-breeding Bonaparte's.

By the way, Laura has recently joined her husband Brent in their permanent move to the far western part of the state. Last year, Laura was our Vice President, and she and Brent edited the Club Newsletter. Both expert birders and photographers, the skill, service, and fellowship that Brent and Laura Slaughter shared with HRBC will be long missed. On the field trip, it was hawk-eye Laura who spotted the only accipiter of the day, a Cooper's.

Species list for 11/10/13.

Mallard	Sanderling	Blue Jay
Surf Scoter	Dunlin	American Crow
Black Scoter	Bonaparte's Gull	Carolina Wren
Bufflehead	Laughing Gull	American Robin
Ruddy Duck	Ring-billed Gull	Gray Catbird
Common Loon	Herring Gull	Northern Mockingbird
Double-crested Cormorant	Great Black-backed Gull	European Starling
Brown Pelican	Rock Pigeon	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Great Blue Heron	Mourning Dove	Red-winged Blackbird
Turkey Vulture	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	House Finch
Cooper's Hawk	Downy Woodpecker	
Black-bellied Plover	Northern Flicker	

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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: **John Adair, 109 Nansemond Turn, Yorktown, Virginia 23693.**

Membership is from September 1st to August 31st. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.** NOTE: Membership dues can be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in the Hidenwood Shopping Center, Newport News, VA, or at Wild Birds Unlimited in the Kiln Creek Shopping Center.

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 6:30 PM.

Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

Renewal _____ New Member _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

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

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