



# Bird Notes

Newsletter of the

**Hampton Roads Bird Club (HRBC)**

[www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org](http://www.hamptonroadsbirdclub.org) and on Facebook

Vol. 64, No. 4

March/April 2016

## March 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program**  
at Sandy Bottom Nature Park

### "The Diversity and Natural History of Hummingbirds"

**By Bill Williams**

Bill Williams is one of the most respected and experienced birders in the state. He was a founder of the Williamsburg Bird Club, and the founder of the Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory. Bill is a past president of the Virginia Society of Ornithology (VSO) and currently a member of its Board. He is Chairman of the Virginia Avian Records Committee and the Editor of the Virginia Society of Ornithology's quarterly journal, *Virginia Birds*.

**Hosted by** Bill Ferris, Rock Moeslein, and Dot Silsby.

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## HRBC Outdoors March-April

### Regular Bird Walks in Newport News Park

First and third Sundays of *every* month 7:00 AM.  
Meet in big parking lot behind Ranger Station.  
Walk leader: Jane Frigo ([birderjane@gmail.com](mailto:birderjane@gmail.com)  
757-873-0721)

### Field Trip to Back Bay & False Cape,

**Saturday, 8:00 AM March 12, 2016**  
(see page 2) Contact Stuart Sweetman  
([nnva4x4@aol.com](mailto:nnva4x4@aol.com) 757-595-1677)

### Field Trip to Great Dismal Swamp,

**Saturday, 7:00 AM April 16, 2016**  
(see page 2) Contact Stuart Sweetman  
([nnva4x4@aol.com](mailto:nnva4x4@aol.com) 757-595-1677)

## April 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting

**6:30 PM Social 7:00 PM Program**  
at Sandy Bottom Nature Park

### "A Video on Identifying Warblers"

Just two days after this meeting, the club will be off to the Great Dismal Swamp, there facing its annual challenge of 'What species of warbler is that one?' Brenda Gervais will introduce this video from the home library of John and Marilyn Adair.

**Hosted by** Virginia Boyles and Becky Rose



Chipping Sparrow (photo by Bill Boeh)

from Sunday walk in NN Park led by Jane Frigo

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## President's Perch

By Dave Youker

For those not at our last meeting, we discussed applying renewed emphasis on our Western Shore Marshes Important Bird Area (IBA). Since the project is so large, it has been broken down into

eleven locations. The locations are Bethel Beach, New Point Comfort Natural Area Preserve, Robins Neck, Goodwin Island, Guinea Neck, Seaford, Langley AFB, Plum Tree Island, Messick Point, Gosnold's Hope, and Grandview. Each location can be attended to separately making the task much easier. I'm happy to say that almost all locations have at least one POC designated. If you'd like to join this conservation effort, you can augment an existing team or sign-up for one of the two remaining locations, Bethel Beach and New Point Comfort. As mentioned at the meeting, training and an orientation will be provided to each team. If you are interested in helping with this HRBC effort, feel free to contact me ([Youkerd@aol.com](mailto:Youkerd@aol.com) 757 344-9385).

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**Field Trip to Back Bay  
National Wildlife Refuge  
and False Cape State Park**

**Saturday, 7:30 AM, March 12, 2016**

By Stuart Sweetman

The March 2016 field trip for the HRBC will be to Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and False Cape State Park in Virginia Beach, VA. During the winter months Back Bay is accessible for group field trips by tram. The tram is a large open air bus type vehicle that holds up to 24 people. Since the tram is open to the elements, warm clothing is highly recommended, as well as any snacks you might want to bring. The tram starts at 8:00 AM and runs through 12:00 PM, driving on the impoundment roads of the refuge and ending up at False Cape for a pit stop before making the return trip. There is a small fee of \$8.00 per person that will be collected prior to boarding the tram. The group will assemble at The Back Bay visitors center which is located at 4005 Sandpiper Road in Virginia Beach at 7:30 AM. Carpooling from your favorite spots can be arranged before the trip or just meet at the visitor's center. I am hoping this year will not be as cold as last year's trip, so as the abundant water filled impoundments and lakes are not frozen over, enabling the group close viewing of the vast amounts of waterfowl that inhabit the refuge in

winter. The sign-up sheet will be at the next business meeting with over half of the seats still available. For any questions, or if unable to attend though already signed up, please contact me at [nnva4x4@aol.com](mailto:nnva4x4@aol.com) or my cell [757-660-6590](tel:757-660-6590).



Red-throated Loon at Fort Monroe (George Boyles)

**Field Trip to the Great Dismal Swamp  
National Wildlife Refuge**

**Saturday, 7:00 AM, April 16, 2016**

By Stuart Sweetman

Our April field trip for the HRBC will be to The Great Dismal Swamp NWR. April is a key month for spring bird migration through our area. What better place to greet the return of spring migrants to our area from their winter haunts, than the lush swamps and wooded trails of the Dismal Swamp? The group will assemble at the parking area at the end of Jericho Ditch Lane at 7:00 AM. We will start our excursion at 7:30 AM hiking the surrounding ditches adjacent to Jericho Ditch until around 12 noon. At noon we will travel by car down to Washington Ditch which is just down the street heading south. Washington Ditch is a popular spot with a very nice boardwalk through the swamp as well as an extensive walking trail that runs parallel to the ditch. Please note the earlier times due to sunrise coming earlier this time of year.

Sign up sheets will be available at the March and April business meetings. Questions about this trip can be directed to Stuart Sweetman at [nnva4x4@aol.com](mailto:nnva4x4@aol.com) or call [\(757\)595-1677](tel:7575951677).

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## Breeding Bird Atlas

By Dave Youker

One of the biggest events Virginia birders will be involved with in the coming years is the VABBA2. This stands for VA Breeding Bird Atlas 2. VA's initial Atlas was conducted from 1985-2020. For background information check the URL <http://www.virginiabirds.net/Virginia-Breeding-Bird-Atlas.html>.

Think that you might be interested in VABBA2? Dr. Ashley Peele, who is leading this effort, will make a presentation to the Williamsburg Bird Club on March 16 at 7:00 PM. For more information about this meeting (like how to get a parking pass for the William and Mary Campus, where the meeting will be held), visit [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org).

This is a great opportunity to contribute to Virginia's second Atlas, and I highly encourage you to attend this meeting and find out more about this important birding project. It will take many birders to make this a successful effort. As always, feel free to contact me with any questions ([Youkerd@aol.com](mailto:Youkerd@aol.com) 757-344-9385).



Harlequin Duck (Bill Boeh), February HRBC trip to CBBT



American Oystercatchers (Bill Boeh) at CBBT

## When Spring Finally Does Come...

By Katrina Dash

### May Book Sale and Raffle

During our regular meeting, Thursday, May 12, 2016 at Sandy Bottom, we will be holding a book sale and raffle to raise funds for the club. If you have books that you would like to donate for the sale, or other bird-related items that you would like to donate for the raffle, please contact Katrina Dash ([kweber427@gmail.com](mailto:kweber427@gmail.com), 915-471-1287) or bring the items to the May meeting.

### Club Picnic on Saturday, June 4

Please "reserve the date" June 4, 2016, for our annual HRBC Picnic at a pavilion between the Ranger Station and Lee Hall Reservoir in Newport News Park. As ever, the event will feature good food, the installation of club officers, and will be preceded by a bird walk about the park. Details from Katrina Dash are forthcoming.

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### HRBC Spring Bird Count on May 7

Nancy Gruttman-Tyler and Bill Boeh will lead our spring bird count on Saturday, May 7, 2016. This

effort, like the Audubon count in December, is split over the Peninsula into 13 sectors (each with a team); but the spring count is not a component of a broader national campaign. If you'd like to participate, please contact Nancy ([gruttmantyler@gmail.com](mailto:gruttmantyler@gmail.com)) or Bill ([dolphrog1@yahoo.com](mailto:dolphrog1@yahoo.com) 757-766-2144).

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## Bits of Bird Science

### Supergene for Reproductive Morphs of *Philomachus Pugnax* (the Ruff)

By Jack Daw

A recent presentation on avian reproduction for HRBC by Prof. Shawn Dash provided some of us with an introduction to the lek, a gang of males whose members put on competitive displays to entice females for copulation. Such behavior sounds rather foreign to our species, but it is of scientific interest upon consideration of the mostly old world ruff, *Philomachus pugnax*. Philo and mache are respectively the roots for love and battle in Greek, and pugnax signifies combative in Latin.



“Territorial” (left) and “Satellite” (right) Male Ruffs [Wikipedia]

The ruff is one of the few lekking birds with a display that is directed at other males. It generally does more showing off than real fighting. Ruff males are found in *three* morphs: typical “territorial” (~83%) with black or chestnut head dress during breeding, “satellite” (~16%) with white

head dress during breeding, and “faeder” (~1%) with plainer, female-like plumage. “Faider” mass is intermediate between that of the usual male and female. Most ruffs winter in the tropics and subtropics, with females then preferring warmer areas than do males.



Close up of Female Ruff (Wikipedia)

Ruffs breed in the high latitudes: Scandinavia, Arctic Russia and occasionally Alaska. Males are not involved in nest building or care of the young. Territorial males display competitively to show which of their number in the lek is worthiest to mate with the females. The whitish satellite males don't spend energy in fending off other males by establishing and defending ground; however, they are tolerated by the others, apparently because their very presence attracts females to the lek grounds; they steal females from the territorial morphs. The much-less-common faeder males were only discovered in 2006; their testes are largest of all, and they have physical relations with both sexes.

The morphing of males is set entirely by genetics. An 18-author paper (Küpper et al., 2015, *Nature Genetics*, Vol. 48, No. 1) states that “development into satellites and faeders is determined by a supergene ... of an inversion on chromosome 11, which contains 125 predicted genes.”

Bill Williams (our March speaker) and Dave Youker (our President) both observed the ruff at Craney Island in 2014. Linnaeus classified ruffs in 1758. And in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the British found this third-of-a-pounder to be a delight for feasting.

References for article on the ruff:

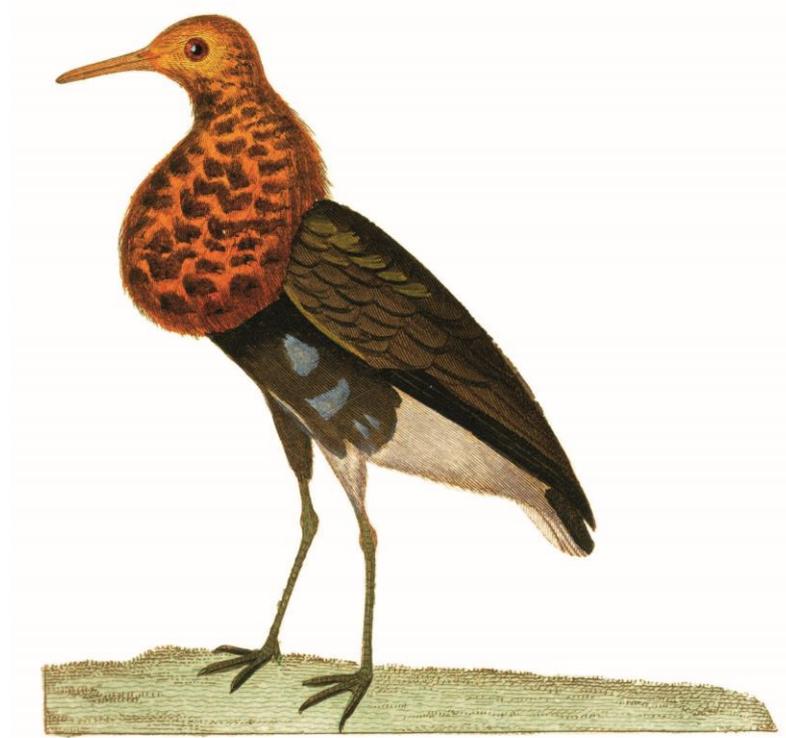
Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Date of last revision: 5 March 2016 14:52

<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ruff&oldid=708423414>

Clemens Küpper, Michael Stocks, Judith E Risse, Natalie dos Remedios, Lindsay L Farrell, Susan B McRae, Tawna C Morgan, Natalia Karlionova, Pavel Pinchuk, Yvonne I Verkuil, Alexander S Kitaysky, John C Wingfield, Theunis Piersma, Kai Zeng, Jon Slate, Mark Blaxter, David B Lank, Terry Burke. A supergene determines highly divergent male reproductive morphs in the ruff. *Nature Genetics*, 2015; DOI: 10.1038/ng.3443

University of Sheffield. "For the birds: Whether you're territorial, a girlfriend stealer or a cross dresser, it's in your genes." *ScienceDaily*. ScienceDaily, 16 November 2015.

<[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/11/151116112456.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/11/151116112456.htm)>.



Le Combattant (Compte de Buffon, 1707-1788)

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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 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup>. **Dues are \$15.00 for individuals and \$20.00 for families.** NOTE: Membership dues can be paid at Wild Wings Nature Store in the Glendale Shopping Center in Newport News, or at Wild Birds on Kiln Creek Parkway in Yorktown. 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.

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### Hampton Roads Bird Club – Membership Form

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

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

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

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

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

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

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