



Northern Neck Audubon News

The Northern Neck of Virginia Chapter of the National Audubon Society

P.O. Box 991, Kilmarnock, Virginia 22482

www.northernneckaudubon.org

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Catching Rays.....*Photo: Paul Servis*

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UPCOMING

Chapter Meetings Are Held

at 3:15.... Upstairs

Lancaster Community Library
Kilmarnock

Monday, March 2nd^h

Teta Kain

Butterflies

Monday, April 1st

To Be Announced

BIRD WALKS

Details on Page 6

Unless otherwise specified, meet
at Grace Church parking lot in

Kilmarnock, 8:00 AM

Additional information
available from Joe Cooney

jcooney805@gmail.com

SPECIAL EVENTS

!!! Saturday/Sunday, March 27-28th

WATERFOWL SHOW

White Stone

!!! Saturday, April 18th

EARTH DAY

Heathsville Farmers' Market

!!! Saturday May 2nd !!!!

OSPREY FESTIVAL

Colonial Beach

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

The Great Backyard Bird Count, a February tradition for the past 23 years, was started in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The results create a real-time snapshot of bird populations and how they are changing over the course of the years. To participate, all you need is an eBird app and at least 15 minutes of time. The Count is held each Valentine's weekend, from Friday through Monday.

This year I joined our friends to the south, the Middle Peninsula Birding Club, on two bird walks. Saturday we visited property bordering the Dragon Run, up by the Community College near Glenss. We identified 25 species that were dominated by the woodpeckers: Downies, Pileated, Red-Bellied, Yellow-Bellied Sapsuckers and Flickers. We covered about a mile and a half; and although things started out slowly, with pretty cold conditions, as the temperature rose, the birds moved more and more.

Sunday we were in Mathews County. It started with a conversation about how we sometimes get called out on eBird for rare sightings. We had some laughs about the emails we have received. It was also a premonition of things to come that afternoon. We climbed up to the second story deck of the house; and before we returned to ground level, our count had already passed 15 species. A walk down to the East River added another five, and there was an otter spotting as well. I remember thinking that I couldn't quite tell what was causing the wake. Then the animal came ashore and walked out onto the flats and into the reeds. It was then that I got a good and identifying look at the otter.

The homeowner was amazed, as he hadn't seen one around for several years. Although he had seen signs of something swimming, he hadn't identified it as an otter and had gone back to looking at the Hooded Mergansers. All in all, we toured his property, coffee and binoculars in hand, for about a half mile. In the end, we spotted and listed 34 species.

After we were finished looking at the birds, the homeowner, Mark, and I discovered that we had both been stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base in the late '80s. There was a good chance that we had met on the flightline back then, as he remembered one of the planes I had worked on.

When I left, I went down to Mobjack Bay. I am really glad that I had. There is a small public access area at the tip of the Peninsula. From there you get a nice view of the surrounding water. combined with the few streets to the north, this makes for a nice little birding area. After spending 30 minutes looking into the water, I decided to look around from the roads. I came to an area with a lot of activity, mostly from Cedar Waxwings and Grackles. Then something orange flew through my binoculars. I tried to follow it, but to no avail. I looked around and noticed some activity in a green bush (no Master Naturalist present to help me ID it). There it perched: a brilliant orange bird with a black head. My first thought: "You picked the wrong day to leave your camera at home." My second thought: "I am going to get an email in a few days from eBird asking for more information on this one." Then it flew to a green bush with pink flowers. I pulled out my book and confirmed what I had suspected. Punched "Oriole" into eBird and got two choices, both RARE at this time of year.

So, on Sunday February 16, I spotted and identified a Baltimore Oriole for the first time. I sent Mark a text message telling him of my sighting and hoping he could come and take a photo; but before I could get a reply, I was chased off by a barking German Shepherd. Awhile later Mark got back to me and met me down in Mobjack. Shortly after he arrived, the Oriole flew back into the yard. He was able to get a few photographs, which will help with the eBird ID and save us from answering an email or two.

What a GREAT Backyard Bird Count it turned out to be.

.....Joe Cooney
President

"Oriole" has a long migratory trail: from the French "oriol," from Medieval Latin "oryolis," from classical Latin "aureole" for "golden" (Au the element), from Proto-Indo-European "aus," which root may be several thousand years old.

....Online Etymological Dictionary

BIRDING ELSEWHERE

The Galapagos islands are 563 miles west of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean. The islands are all of volcanic origin. The western islands are the newest and have active taller volcanoes. From the west to the east, the islands get older, flatter and the volcanoes more dormant.

Flora and Fauna had to travel from elsewhere by water or air to establish in the islands. The original pioneers developed a set of unique ecosystems with very few mammal species. The ecosystems vary from island to island and low elevation to high elevation.

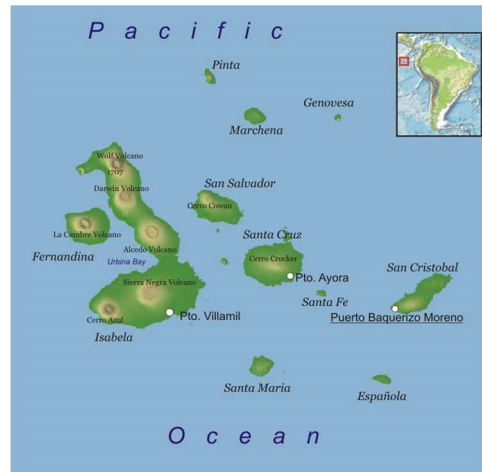
The birds make up a large percentage of the species on the islands. Some of these birds, Darwin saw early in his career. Over the years, introduced species have challenged the original isolated species and changed the ecosystem. However, the islands are still a spectacular place to see birds.

I traveled to Ecuador late January 2020 and spent time in the Galapagos in early February 2020. First, I spent 2 nights on Santa Cruz island with a sea and land tour to Isabella and Tintoreras islands. Inland on Isabella, I saw white-cheeked pintail, Galapagos flamingo, common gallinule and black-necked stilt. On the coast of Tintoreras, I saw blue booby, Galapagos penguins, lava heron, and brown pelican.

Next, I spent 2 nights on San Cristóbal. I took a tour to Lobos Island off the northwest coast of San Cristóbal. Here I saw a huge number of magnificent frigate bird and more blue booby.

Elsewhere I saw one of the Darwin finch, yellow warbler and a Galapagos mockingbird.

...by Kyle Langford
Photos by Kyle Langford



Galapagos Islands from Wikimedia Commons



Yellow Warbler



One of the Darwin Finch

Birds of the Galápagos

Photos by Kyle Langford

Blue Footed Booby



**Lava
Heron**



**Magnificent Frigate
Bird**



Common Gallinule



Galápagos Penguin



Galápagos Flamingo

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

While I know many of you already, there are still more of you I need to meet. I was asked to introduce myself and summarize the journey of how I got here. That is always a hard question for me to answer, because if I was asked individually by ten folks, they might each get one of ten different answers.

The short story is this: I jointed the United States Air Force in 1985 and retired in Spokane after 24 years of service. I met my wife through some mutual friends, while she was in Spokane on a travel nurse assignment. She had grown up in Northern Virginia and had spent summers at Mosquito Point in White Stone and still owned a home there. She moved to Spokane in the spring of 2014. In the mornings we would walk my dog in a field not far from my house. Often, we noticed a plump yellow bird with a black necklace, singing from the top of a small tree or sitting on a post in the field. One day my wife asked "THE" question. It is a question all of us have asked at one time or another: "I wonder what kind of bird that is?"

So, I looked it up on You Tube, having no idea that there were better ways to identify a bird. I went through hundreds of songs, not realizing I could narrow my search on Google with the words, "yellow and black singing bird." After a few long hours, I found the Western Meadowlark. That was it! Growing up I knew there were Blue Jays and Cardinals, maybe even a sparrow, a duck and some seagulls. I had no idea there was a Meadowlark.

The next question was: "What else can I identify?" My wife bought me a *Peterson Guide*, we got some Vortex Binoculars, and we were off. In the beginning we had one simple rule: we could count a new species only if we could both see it. This was challenging with only one set of binoculars, but we didn't let that stop us. I decided to start with ducks. They look different from each other and hang out around water. Out we went exploring, in and around Spokane, identifying ducks: Pintails, Cinnamon Teals, Mallards, Buffleheads and Ruddies. We kept checking them off: Northern Shovelers, Redheads, Pied-Billed Grebes and Ringnecks. There were the American Wigeon and the Common Merganser. We crossed paths with some Coots and identified a Common Goldeneye and a Wood Duck. Although we may have misidentified a few, we were having fun.

When I left Spokane, I had 80 species carefully marked in my new *Sibley Guide*.

In 2017 we sold my house and travelled back and forth across the country three times between April and September of 2017. I birdwatched everywhere we went, honing my identification skills. In September of 2017 we moved into the cottage at Mosquito Point. A short time later, while attending the Heathsville Farmers' Market, we ran into Melissa and Edie, who were staffing the Northern Neck Audubon Society's booth. We signed up that day, and eventually I went on my first bird walk.

Every year I have become a better birder than I was the year before. I have learned valuable skills, like slow down and observe, slow down and observe more details, and then slow down some more. Only after doing THAT, try to identify the bird. In the old days I would see a bird, look through the book, look for the bird, look through the book...and then I couldn't find the bird again. It is difficult to identify a bird when you're looking in a book.

I am always searching for opportunities to discover a new species. Through the NNAS, I learned about eBird. Currently I am at 187 species in Virginia alone. Of these, 130 have been seen at my house, including a Wilson's Warbler that stopped by in October of 2018.

It is a wonderful thing to share this passion with like-minded folks. I enjoy bird walks and have been active in birding as well as in sharing my birding with others. During the recent Great Backyard Bird Count, I saw my first Baltimore Oriole, officially number 291 on my life list.

I am excited by the opportunity to serve as Chapter President. I expect to finish out the rest of the year and then throw my name in for the next term, if you will have me. As an organization, our membership is getting older; so we need to find ways to do things differently. We are all busy, and our time is valuable. Increasing participation in our chapter, conducting our business in new and efficient ways, and transitioning smoothly into the next 50 years will be the goals I set for the NNAS.

I would like to end with some good news. Recently, the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel

expansion project was set to displace 25,000 nesting terns, skimmers and gulls. On Valentine's Day, the Governor of Virginia announced a major proposal to address this issue. Like many of you, I had written a letter to protest the nest displacement. Well, those letters were read, and the result is optimistic. With tight timelines and ambitious ideas, the Commonwealth of Virginia is addressing the problem.

Rip Rap Island will be turned into a habitable home with additional barges being brought in to create more nesting habitat. There are further, long-term answers in the works, with the possibility of building a new, manmade island for the birds. New regulations are being drafted, guides that will ensure that any future construction project consider environmental impact in comparison with overall benefit.

2020 is a year to celebrate. In July, Hickory Hollow will turn 20. Most importantly, in December the Northern Neck Chapter of the National Audubon Society, Inc. (our official name) will turn 50. Thank you to those trailblazers of 1970, who made us the first National Audubon Society chapter in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Thank you for all you have done in getting us this far. I will need your help in preparing us for the next 50 years.

.....*Joe Cooney*
President

BIRD WALKS

Monday, March 9th

Deltaville Maritime Museum & Holly Pt.
Nature Area

Saturday, March 28th

Rapp.River Valley NWR, Tayloe Unit

Monday, April 13th

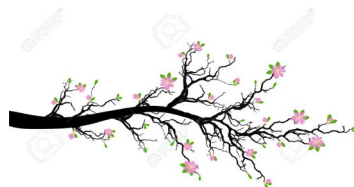
Rapp.River Valley NWR, Wilna Unit

Saturday, April 25th...Need leader.

Monday, May 11th

Chilton Woods

SEASONS



As I sit in front of my fireplace, a seed and plant catalog in my lap, I wonder what challenges this spring will bring. It appears as if the warm winter weather that regularly comes in has arrived earlier this year and is longer-lasting. Daffodils are blooming, and some early warblers have arrived. Herons already have nests up and running in the rookery in my marsh.

Unfortunately, my peach, nectarine and plum trees will be in full bloom by late February, unless an Arctic blast arrives; and then they will be brown and unfruitful for the year.

The birds and insects must be as confused as my trees. As I try to choose what shrubs and trees to order with the Audubon grant, the very wet winter and spring are complicating my decisions.

Last fall we planted osier dogwood and black chokecherry. Fortunately, they don't mind wet feet, as they have been sitting in puddles for weeks now. So I am looking at black gum (swamp tupelo), clethra, more cardinal flower and marsh marigolds to fill in the empty spots on the property. Finding good native plants with high bird value is getting increasingly difficult as the weather continues to change. We are currently in Planting Zone 7b, but soon to be 8 (warmer) if the current temperature trend keeps up.

It looks like "adapt, adapt, adapt," and hope Mother Nature is able to as well.

.....*Beth Kendrick*

BLUEBIRDING

Over the past weekend we stayed with a family in Virginia Beach, where a time warp blew us "forward to the future" into what felt like an April clime. Daffodils massed in yellow, fruit trees frothed in pink and bluebirds sang "in warble." As a result of their songs, we began to muse on how to attract them. On-line research offered some interesting ideas from the North American Bluebird Society and a website called "Sialis."

Both sources agree that the siting of the box is crucial and that protecting the nest is a challenge. Their ideas include:

A. Having the entrance hole facing East. The purpose for this is to capture the warmth of the morning sun and to avoid the more intense heat of the afternoon, as well as what might be rising wind as the day progresses. If you can't manage the eastern approach, the southern is a second choice.

B. Although it's necessary to have some nearby perching site, like a fence or small trees, the bulk of the habitat should be grassland. Keep the grasses mown. Orchards and dirt roads are highly desirable if you have them; but an open vista, as opposed to dense woodland, is most vital.

C. A novel barrier to predators like snakes or mischief-makers like squirrels is the use of carpeting-attachment strips. Slender, vertical bands of this adhesive, laid up along a wooden post on all four sides, prevent invasions.

D. Use a strip of blue vinyl ribbon (NOT fabric, which can unravel) to the top of the pole to emulate wing-waving. This is a lot simpler to do than is another suggestion: playing a recorded song!

....Letha Harris

VOLUNTEERING

KUDZU CUTTING

Help us save our trees that are being suffocated by kudzu. We will be using shears and loppers to cut the vines and free our trees as part of a multi-step plan to get rid of kudzu in which we cut the vines in the spring, spray the leaves with herbicide in the summer, and occasionally burn the kudzu in the fall.

March 4th: 12:30 to 3:30 PM

Bring water, long pants, long sleeves, and any shearing tools or work gloves if you have them. We will also be providing tools, gloves and safety glasses.

TAYLOE TREE TUBE REMOVAL

We will be removing tree tubes from trees that have been planted some ten years ago on the Tayloe Unit. We will be walking through the forest, and potentially encountering thorns. Protective clothing needed.

March 12th: 1:00 to 4:00 PM

Bring long pants, long shirt and hiking boots or sturdy footwear, hip waders or bush pants can be helpful. You may bring, or we can provide, tools.

For details on both these Rappahannock River Wildlife Refuge projects, please contact lauren_cruz@fws.gov.

Application for Membership in NNAS - Chapter Code X50, 7XCH

- ☐ Local Chapter Only Membership - \$15.00 annually, renewable in June; includes chapter on-line newsletter.
- ☐ National & Local Membership - \$20.00 introductory (\$35.00 after), is above, plus glossy National Audubon Magazine.
Make checks payable to "National Audubon Society".

Name _____ Phone _____ - _____

Address _____ **E-Mail** _____

City_____

State _____ **Zip** _____

Mail to P.O. Box 991, Kilmarnock, Virginia 22482



Northern Neck Audubon Society Resources					
Officers		Committee Chairs			Media
President	Melissa Gross	Outreach	Porter Washington	Membership	Website: www.northernneckaudubon.org suggestions to: nnas1970@gmail.com Newsletter - five issues annually submit ideas, articles etc. to: waterthrush@verizon.net
Vice President	Kevin Howe	Property Mgt	Kevin Howe	Newsletter	
Past President	Nancy Garvey			Website	
Secretary	Paula Boundy	Programs	Joe Cooney	Publicity	
Treasurer		Field Trips		Conservation/ Citizen Science	
		Advocacy		Joe Cooney	

Directors		
Expires 2020	Expires 2021	Expires 2022
Les Kilduff Margaret Gerdts Kyle Langford	Joe Cooney Porter Washington Betsy Washington	Beth Kendrick Buzz Cox Open