



Lower Neuse Bird Club



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November Meeting Minutes

by Jura Hill

The November meeting of the Lower Neuse Bird Club was called to order at 7:00 PM on Tuesday the 5th by Wade Fuller, with 21 members in attendance. The first topic of discussion was the annual Pea Island trip. A wrap-up of the prior weekend's field trip to Simmons Street Wetlands was detailed. The annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was discussed, and the December 7th field trip to Pamlico-Oriental was pored over regarding the route order and meeting places.

A hearty thank-you was given to Olwen for providing refreshments. And a reminder of dues not yet paid was made. A reminder was also made regarding the December meeting being replaced by a Christmas party at the home of Les Coble on Sunday, December 8th at 5:00 PM.

In the Show & Tell portion, Olwen reminded us about Roger Tory Peterson being adamant about not calling even the most common bird, "just a...". Before showing us a bird that had met its demise at a window, she wanted us to consider the bird's entire life history. How far had it traveled? How many bugs has it eaten? It was "not just a" Yellow-rumped Warbler she presented. Wade mentioned hearing screech owls more often around young pine plantations. Several people talked about recent sightings near Fort Macon, including a male Ring-necked Pheasant walking down the road!

The speaking portion of the meeting was a presentation by Les Coble called 'The Birth and Growth of Birding ID Tools (History of the Citizen Scientist)'. The slide presentation was done using the club's new projector! The oldest organized gathering for discussing bird watching was called the Nuttall Ornithological Club in 1873. This same club produced the first published ornithological journal in 1876 called the *Bulletin of the Nuttall Ornithological Club*. In 1883, this became *The Auk*, which is still in publication today. As time progressed, other bird books and guides came about, from *Birds Through an Opera Glass* (which brought the plume trade to light and mostly to an end), to the beautiful color plates of Peterson, to the many digital formats of today. In 1900, the first Christmas Bird Count took place, and began an era of every day birders becoming citizen scientists. The "real" scientists took note, and have used this information to track bird populations. Today, the most popular tool used to gather data is the Cornell University-Audubon Society joint venture, **eBird**. Les went over the app and web site, sharing how valuable it is for reporting and gathering encyclopedic information about birds of the world. We all learned a lot about the history and future of birding!

December Christmas Party

Members of LNBC are invited to the annual Christmas party, hosted by Les and Joan Coble. Spouses/guests are welcome! Full details are on Page 2. There is no Tuesday night meeting this month. Our next regular meeting will be on January 7, 2020. Happy Holidays to all LNBC members!



LOWER NEUSE BIRD CLUB HOLIDAY GATHERING



Where: Les & Joan Coble, 4171 Aurora Rd., Ernul, NC

What to Bring: A dish to share... salad, veggie, appetizer, cheese, nuts, dips, or dessert. You should also bring along some wine or your favorite adult beverage.

Directions: Traveling from New Bern cross the Neuse River. Travel 3 miles to Old Vanceboro Rd. (this is the first right after crossing the double set of RR tracks). Turn right and travel a very short 0.2 miles to St. Delights Church Rd. Turn right and follow until in ends at Aurora Rd. in 12.4 miles. Turn right onto Aurora Rd. and travel 4.1 miles to the 1000' of white vinyl fence. Use the second gate. It will be open.

If you are coming from Grantsboro go north at the traffic light onto Rt. 306 almost 11 miles to Aurora Rd. (Sometimes called Tunsall Swamp Road) Turn left and travel 5.5 miles to the vinyl fencing. Use the first gate.

For those using a GPS, great. Just IGNORE it if it suggests you turn off of Aurora Road. STAY on Aurora Rd.!



Saturday Field Trips

Mark your calendars with the following dates for this season's bird walks. Most trips end by noon and do not require much walking. Remember to bring your binoculars, scopes, field guides, insect repellent, rain gear, snacks and water.

Unless otherwise announced, all trips depart from the parking lot of the Bridge Pointe Hotel in New Bern at 7 AM sharp. Carpools can be arranged as we meet up. The planned destination may be changed at the last minute if a special sighting or different location gives us a better opportunity for birding. Information will be updated with each newsletter.

Note for Dec. 7 bird walk:

There are two rendezvous points: New Bern area birders can meet up at the Bridge Pointe, 7 AM sharp as usual. Pamlico area birders can meet at Pamlico High School on Hwy. 55 at 7:30.

- December 7: Pamlico County/Oriental
- January 4: New Bern ponds (ducks and winter birds)
- February 1: Lake Mattamuskeet
- March 7: Fort Macon SP
- April 4: Croatan National Forest (spring migrants/warbblers)
- May 2: Beaufort County (Henslow's Sparrow)
- May 16: Camp Brinson (Black-throated Green/breeding warblers)*
- June 6: North River Wetlands Preserve (Dickcissel)

* = *bonus trip*



NC Coastal Federation Birding Opportunity

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is offering a two-hour birding cruise on the Lady Swan (40 passenger vessel) out of Hammocks Beach on Sunday, December 15, 2019, from 10 AM-noon. JoAnne Powell is the leader for this trip. Contact the NCCF to register:

<https://www.nccoast.org/about-us/contact-us/>



LNBC Membership Dues

If you haven't paid your dues for 2019-2020, it's not too late to do so. Dues are \$15 per person, and cover the Program Year from September to May. Your dues provide for our room rentals, monthly programs and field trips, our newsletter, our holiday party, and any additional projects and donations undertaken by the club.

Dues may be paid at a monthly meeting, or you may send them directly to:

Christine Stoughton Root
LNBC Treasurer
651 Quail Road
Merritt, NC 28556

Checks should be made payable to LNBC.

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Outer Banks Trip Report

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird Club's annual trip to the Outer Banks was held on November 12-13. It was planned for a full day of birding the first day, as we traveled to Nags Head, where we would stay overnight at the Comfort Inn, just down the beach from Jennette's Pier. The second day would allow us to make several stops within the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge.

As it turned out, weather for the two days would make some of the stops challenging, but we were undaunted as we set out at 7:30 AM from the Chocowinity Rest Area on Hwy-17N. The first stop was at the *Roper Research Station* just off of Hwy-64. We were there for about 1.5 hours, covering 3-4 miles as we saw numerous Bald Eagles, one lone Tundra Swan (flyover), Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, Bluebirds, Sparrows (Song & Savannah), Meadowlarks, Warblers (Palm, Pine and Yellow-rumped) and others. Total species count was 30, give or take a few, depending on where you happen to be looking.

We skipped *Pettigrew SP* on our way to the Outer Banks, and opted to go straight to *Alligator River NWR* since we were running between two rain bands, but staying dry, trying to get to Jennette's Pier before the winds picked up, even if we had to endure a little rain at the pier. However, not to miss an opportunity along the way, we pulled over at the Creswell Catfish Ponds (eBird Hotspot) to check out a flock of Canada Geese. A few of the geese appeared to be smaller than the others, and with the scopes, we concluded that they were Cackling Geese. Life Bird for me and others! Whoo-hoo!

Next stop was the Tyrrell County Visitor Center on the banks of the Scuppernon River for a rest stop and bag lunch. Still staying dry, but the winds were picking up a bit. On to the *Alligator River NWR*, where an Ash-throated Flycatcher had been reported four days prior. Maybe we will get lucky!

Oops, one more opportunity-stop for a look/see before we cross the Alligator River. There is a parking area just off the highway at *J. Morgan Futch Gamelands*, so we decided to take advantage of being there. We saw numerous waterfowl in the distance, further east, so we drove on to the next access road. Again, the waterfowl were in the distance, but we did encounter a flock of +/- 300 Common Grackle, more Bald Eagles, House Wren, Sparrows (White-throated, Song & Swamp), Eastern Phoebe, and Pine Warbler, among others. Thirteen species, in all.

Finally arrived at River Road (*Alligator River NWR*), and drove through wetlands that were hardly wet and quite grown-up in places. A small flock of Tundra Swan flew over, but little else, except for the Peregrine Falcon that Les spotted at the intersection of Sawyer Lake Rd. and Milltail Rd. We drove about 15 miles through the refuge on really good (rocked and well-stabilized) roads, looking but seeing very little. Several N. Harriers but no waterfowl, no shore birds, no sparrows, no Ash-throated Flycatcher (previously seen in the Milltail Rd. area), no bear, no bobcats – we did see a few deer as the clouds closed in and a light mist began to fall. Made our way back out to the highway, but it was Hwy-264, not Hwy-64, that we came on. Had it not been for Wade, we would have headed south toward Engelhard, NC. Hey, it was a paved road and they looked about the same! Seems like it's getting late, but it's only about 3:00 PM. The rain clouds are closing in!

Continued on Page #5

Outer Banks Trip Report

by Ronnie Hewlette

Continued from Page #4

Nothing left to do but head to the Comfort Inn in Nags Head. when we arrived in the rain, the wind was blowing quite briskly. With the wet tiles at the entrance, and the winds off the ocean, funneling around the buildings, it was a real chore to come and go to the vehicles without slipping or sliding. It was a “weather-channel moment”, if we only had a video camera! Oh, wait, someone did make a video...

We decided that a trip to the end of Jennette’s Pier was not a good option, at this point. Some of us were able to look from the room balconies to see the harshness of the rough seas, blowing sand, and wind-swept beaches. A few birds were counted – Black Scoters, N. Gannets, gulls, Sanderlings. Nothing special, but definitely not “just a bird” on the beach!

Social at 5:00 PM, review of the day’s findings and plans for the morning – dinner at Darrell’s Seafood in Manteo. Complimentary breakfast was available at 6:00 AM, so we planned to depart at 7:15 AM, heading South to the Oregon Inlet Fishing Center/Marina/Coast Guard Station. The rain had stopped overnight, but the temps dropped and the winds picked up even more. Temp was 43F, wind was blowing at 22+, wind chill was around 34F – good morning to be out birding!

Most notable sighting at the Oregon Inlet Marina was the “Ghost Loon”, seen early-on by Carol, but not seen again until we drove around to the other side of the marina. Also had Scoters fly over, plus Swans in the distance, Eagled, Boat-tailed Grackles, and Brown Pelicans... oh, an a Phoebe.

Next, we drove over the newly finished Marc Basnight Bridge, which connects Hatteras Island and Bodie Island as it spans (2.8 miles) Oregon Inlet, at a max height of 90 feet. Quite a view!

Now we have some concentrations of birds to look at! We started at North Pond, at the Salt Flats Wildlife Trail. Canada Geese, swans, ducks, gulls, Black Skimmers (20 flew right at us, weaving and flashing together in unison) – birds were everywhere! Les and I were able to isolate in our scopes the Eared Grebe that had been reported in this location for several days. It was at a distance, and it was diving a lot, making it difficult to catch a good view of it, but it was there!

We positioned ourselves on the leeward side of the dike, out of the worst of the winds, staying for about ½ an hour, sorting out the birds within our view, and marveling at the flights of birds in the distance, before moving on to the viewing blind on North Pond.

Highlights at the blind were the number of Great Black-backed Gulls (10), Lesser Black-backed Gulls (24), and Black Skimmers (25). Les and I saw a male Common Merganser, not frequently seen in this location, but occasionally reported. The winds were not too bad at this location, behind some dunes and out of the wind in the blind.

The Visitor Center was open and we were able to see Tundra Swan, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Scaup, Bufflehead. Redhead, and White Pelicans in good number; plus a White Ibis, Tricolored Heron, N. Harrier, and an unexpected Eastern Meadowlark, hanging at a stand-still, as it tried to fly into the wind.

At this point, the group disbanded, as some started back home. Four of us decided to brave the wind and walk over to the observation point on the North side of the New Field Pond. This was a productive stop, adding Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron and White Ibis (70). The largest count for White Pelicans (42) was seen here, sitting as a group not far from the observation point.

Continued on Page #6

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Outer Banks Trip Report

*by Ronnie Hewlette
Continued from Page #5*

Moving on, six of us drove down Hwy-12 to the next pull-out on New Field Pond. Lots more swans and ducks; nothing new except for a male and female Hooded Merganser.

Noticeably, no gulls, but we did have 120 American Avocets fly up, right in front of us, as if on cue, just for us to watch. Beautiful!

As we headed back toward home, Wade, Kevin and I stopped at the Bodie Island Lighthouse. There were not many ducks on the pond, but around the parking area we saw four American Pipits, three Dark-eyed Juncos, and a Gray Catbird. Nice adds and the first sightings of the Pipits, for me, since January 2018.

Final stops at Pettigrew State Park, back in Washington County, added Forster's Terns, Woodpeckers (Downy, Pileated, N. Flicker), and a Golden-crowned Kinglet (heard by Wade).

It proved to be a good trip in spite of the weather. The first day, we tallied 50 species. Second day, the group added 30 new species to the list, and the stops made on the way back added 7 more, for a trip total of 87 species.

We tallied 25 different Species-groups over the two days, with the most sightings within the ducks/geese/swans group, with 19 species. Gulls, wading birds, and hawks/eagles all had 5 or more species in those groups.



*American Pipit
Photo by Ronnie Hewlette*



*American Avocets
Photo by Kevin O'Kane*

Outer Banks Trip – 2019 Checklist

Cackling Goose	Ring-billed Gull	Peregrine Falcon
Canada Goose	Herring Gull	Eastern Phoebe
Tundra Swan	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Blue Jay
Blue-winged Teal	Great Black-backed Gull	American Crow
Northern Shoveler	Forster's Tern	Fish Crow
Gadwall	Royal Tern	Tree Swallow
American Wigeon	Black Skimmer	Carolina Chickadee
Mallard	Common Loon	Golden-crowned Kinglet
American Black Duck	Northern Gannet	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Northern Pintail	Double-crested Cormorant	House Wren
Redhead	American White Pelican	Carolina Wren
Ring-necked Duck	Brown Pelican	European Starling
Greater Scaup	Great Blue Heron	House Sparrow
Lesser Scaup	Great Egret	American Pipit
Black Scoter	Snowy Egret	Gray Catbird
Bufflehead	Little Blue Heron	Eastern Bluebird
Hooded Merganser	Tricolored Heron	Dark-eyed Junco
Common Merganser	White Ibis	White-throated Sparrow
Ruddy Duck	Black Vulture	Savannah Sparrow
Pied-billed Grebe	Turkey Vulture	Song Sparrow
Eared Grebe	Northern Harrier	Swamp Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Bald Eagle	Eastern Meadowlark
Mourning Dove	Red-tailed Hawk	Red-winged Blackbird
American Coot	Belted Kingfisher	Common Grackle
American Avocet	Red-bellied Woodpecker	Boat-tailed Grackle
Killdeer	Downy Woodpecker	Palm Warbler
Sanderling	Pileated Woodpecker	Pine Warbler
Greater Yellowlegs	Northern Flicker	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Laughing Gull	American Kestrel	Northern Cardinal

Lower Neuse Bird Club

ID Tips: Is It a Greater Scaup or Lesser Scaup?

by Les Coble

Very simply as an opening statement, **I use this mnemonic:**

The word Greater starts with the letter “G”. A Greater Scaup has a round, as in the shape of the “G”, head. The Greater Scaup has a “g”reen head. The Greater Scaup is the larger (*greater*) of the two. The Greater Scaup has the larger (*greater*) black tip on the bill. And, the Greater Scaup has the longer (*greater*) white stripe in the wing. The Greater Scaup has more (*greater*) white on the side. One of those may ring with you for the future.

More details on these mnemonics: Let us not think this is perfectly simple. Just as a diagnostician puts many suggestive symptoms together to state a cause of your illness, it could still be incorrect!

1. The head shape on a Lesser Scaup has a distinct change in the shape behind the eye. I think of this shape as the letter “L” for Lesser, a letter with a distinct change in shape.
2. A Lesser Scaup head color, for the few times the iridescence shows, is green or purple. Iridescence in the Greater is always green.
3. A Lesser Scaup is about 2 inches shorter, in flight, than a Greater Scaup. This is not much help, but the white stripe in the wing extends to the primary flight feathers in the Greater Scaup, and only ½ the wing length in a Lesser Scaup.
4. The black tip on the bill, called a nail, is bigger in length and width on the Greater Scaup.
5. The side of the Greater Scaup, its flanks, is whiter, basically because the barring is extremely finer and thus appearing less “grey”. The barring is only visible at very close range.

So, if we could be so lucky as to have these two species together at close range, as in the photo, we could go home warm inside with the confident ID. The huge rafts of these birds are often at a distance, light is often to our side, the birds are resting (heads down), and if flying the 40+ MPH speeds makes seeing the wing stripe and comparing it to an adjacent in-flight bird a challenge for even a photographer. But, put it all together and maybe you can avoid the line in the eBird checklist that says *Scaup sp.* There are several other less distinct clue. Regardless, maybe at January’s monthly meeting, we can get insightful clues from others. Does the flight seem different?

Lesser Scaup (left)
Greater Scaup (right)



Congratulations to Sally Rowe

by LNBC Members

In addition to being a fine birder and head of the all-important refreshment committee, Sally is also a talented and award-winning quilter. Below are three of her submissions to the **Bee by the River 2019 Quilt Show** that took place at the Convention Center October 25th & 26th. Notice that the first two quilts received First Place blue ribbons and the last a Third Place. Out of the hundreds of quilts submitted for judging, Sally won three ribbons, which is quite an accomplishment and recognition of her talent!

