

Lower Neuse Bird Club

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Camp Brinson Bird Walk – May 12, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette

Following a successful Bird Walk at Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park [see page #4-5 – Ed.] on the first Saturday in May, the Club scheduled a trip to Camp Brinson in Craven County, just West of Havelock, for Tuesday, May 12th. Wade Fuller served as host and provided access for the club to visit this privately maintained camp, which is surrounded by Croatan National Forest lands.

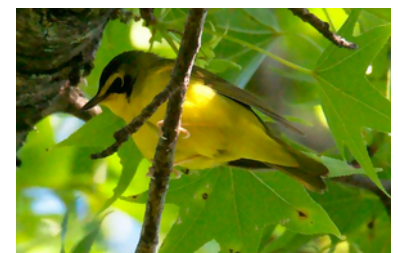
A group of 15 birders met at the parking lot across from McDonald's in Havelock around 7:30 AM and caravanned to the camp, which is about 5 miles from there, down Lake Road.

Proceeding from the gate at the State Road, we drove past Camp Bryan, with its pens of deer hounds, crossing a short, single lane, wood bridge. The overall experience, with the dusty roads, the smell of pine straw, the fragrance of flowering plants, the dappled sunlight from the morning sun – it all mentally awakens pleasant memories of previous experiences. This is nice!

With a few stops along the way, we begin to hear and see the birds that are about. Blue Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings are in the trees and shrubs that line an open field. A Gray Catbird makes an appearance and what is believed to be an Orchard Oriole chases one of the Grosbeaks. A Chat is heard in the distance. As we move along, Ovenbirds are heard calling from the open pine areas, along with Carolina Wrens, Common Yellowthroats, and Great Crested Flycatchers.

At the camp lodge, we pause for a rest-stop, and then we proceed deeper into this unique setting of avian biodiversity. The weather conditions are made for birding; a little cool to start with at mid-50's, light winds, and clear skies.

Wade took us to stops that he has found to be productive in the past, looking for specific species. The group quickly located a Kentucky Warbler, first by call and then by sight. This bird seems to be more plentiful this spring than in recent years, having been a targeted bird a few days prior at Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park, and now here at Camp Brinson. Wade noted that this is a "First" sighting of a Kentucky Warbler at Camp Brinson. Beautiful bird! This little warbler was quite cooperative, sitting in full view on a small branch for some time, allowing everyone to get a good look. Using a green laser-pointer, Wade was able to get us all focused on the birds' location in the trees, without disturbing the bird.



Kentucky Warbler
©Michael Cheves

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

Camp Brinson Bird Walk – May 12th, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from front page

We were able to locate many of the often-seen birds, as well as some that are not so easily encountered, like the Swainson's Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Hooded Warbler (heard by a few but not seen), and the Black-throated Green Warbler. In all, there were 13 Warbler species reported for the day.

We searched for the American Redstarts, but were not successful. Three Cormorants were seen through the trees, flying over Long Lake, but Anhingas were not seen this year, as they have been in past visits. Two Barred Owls were heard (duetting pair) about mid-morning. On the way out, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was observed reacting with a "distraction display" (open wings and flared tail) – wish I'd been quicker with my camera. They were obviously nesting nearby and disapproved of our presence!

A total of 45 species were reported while at the camp. An additional 9 species were seen at the BridgePointe Motel, where the New Bern group gathered, including about 50 Cedar Waxwings in a cherry tree. As they flew away in a tight flock, the sunlight was reflected against their bodies as the flock twisted and turned in sync with one another, higher and higher into the morning sky. Impressive sight!

Always a rewarding day when you can visit Camp Brinson – Thanks Wade, for making this possible.



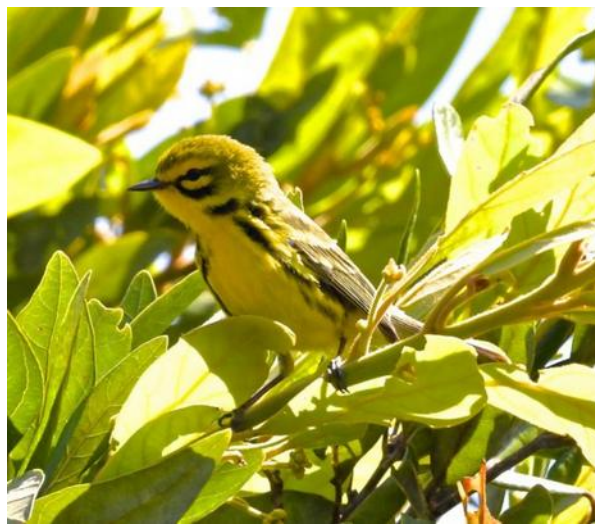
LNBC Camp Brinson Checklist – May 12th, 2020

| # | Species | # | Species | # | Species |
|----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| 1 | Mallard | 19 | Acadian Flycatcher | 37 | Common Grackle |
| 2 | Mourning Dove | 20 | Great Crested Flycatcher | 38 | Ovenbird |
| 3 | Killdeer | 21 | White-eyed Vireo | 39 | Worm-eating Warbler |
| 4 | Laughing Gull | 22 | Red-eyed Vireo | 40 | Black-and-white Warbler |
| 5 | Lesser Black-backed Gull | 23 | Blue Jay | 41 | Prothonotary Warbler |
| 6 | Yellow-billed Cuckoo | 24 | Fish Crow | 42 | Swainson's Warbler |
| 7 | Chimney Swift | 25 | Tufted Titmouse | 43 | Kentucky Warbler |
| 8 | Double-crested Cormorant | 26 | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | 44 | Common Yellowthroat |
| 9 | Great Blue Heron | 27 | Carolina Wren | 45 | Hooded Warbler |
| 10 | White Ibis | 28 | Eastern Bluebird | 46 | Northern Parula |
| 11 | Turkey Vulture | 29 | Gray Catbird | 47 | Pine Warbler |
| 12 | Cooper's Hawk | 30 | Northern Mockingbird | 48 | Yellow-throated Warbler |
| 13 | Barred Owl | 31 | European Starling | 49 | Prairie Warbler |
| 14 | Red-headed Woodpecker | 32 | Cedar Waxwing | 50 | Black-throated Green Warbler |
| 15 | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 33 | Eastern Towhee | 51 | Summer Tanager |
| 16 | Downy Woodpecker | 34 | Red-winged Blackbird | 52 | Northern Cardinal |
| 17 | Pileated Woodpecker | 35 | Yellow-breasted Chat | 53 | Blue Grosbeak |
| 18 | Eastern Wood-Pewee | 36 | Orchard Oriole | 54 | Indigo Bunting |

Camp Brinson Photos – May 12th, 2020



Swainson's Warbler
©Michael Cheves



Prairie Warbler
©Michael Creedon



Blue Grosbeak
©Ronnie Hewlette



Black-and-White Warbler
©Michael Creedon



Black-throated Green Warbler
©Michael Creedon

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Bird Walk – Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park May 2, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird Club has not had a Bird Walk since March 7th due to the concern over Social-distancing Guidelines ushered in with the Coronavirus Pandemic. The March and April club meetings were canceled as well. Individuals have continued to bird alone for the most part.

The end of April and early May saw the arrival of the spring migrants and the sightings at Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park on Broad Creek Road have been impressive. With the Coronavirus cases showing a decline in the county, the Club felt that a Bird Walk at Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park could be safely scheduled for the first Saturday of May and not violate the Social-distancing guidelines.

A group of 16 birders met at the parking lot around 7:00 AM and separated into two groups to walk the trails, down to the boardwalk on Broad Creek and back to the parking lot.

The Kentucky Warbler that has been reported at the trailhead for about 10 days was still there, singing. I think everyone got to hear and see this bird as it responded to calls and songs that were played, although it rarely stayed in one spot for long.

Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park provides trails that allow one to investigate a diversity of habitat as you get away from crowds. It was a beautiful morning to be outside, with clear skies, light winds and comfortable temperatures in the 50's and 60's.

A total of 62 species was reported between the two groups. Each group had sightings that were unique to their group. The notable reported species included Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Anhinga and Mississippi Kite. (Both the Anhinga and the Mississippi Kite were quick flyovers.) No one person saw all 62 species, but it was a great opportunity to see and hear Worm-eating Warblers, Wood Thrushes, and Ovenbirds; to see four White-breasted Nuthatches, mutually feeding; to hear the "pit-ti-tuck" of the Summer Tanager, and then to see this beautiful bird. Both groups found the King Rail in the marsh at the boardwalk, but only one group saw the Prairie Warbler at that location. Two Green Herons flew over as we spaced out along the boardwalk, and the Bald Eagle was spotted in the distance.

It felt good to go birding together again; to share experiences, knowledge, and insights, and just to be there!



*A bird of the deciduous forests of the southeastern United States, the **Kentucky Warbler**'s loud song can be heard far more frequently than the brightly-colored bird can be seen. It stays near the ground and the lower levels of the forest, and nests on the ground.*

Photo ©Ronnie Hewlette
Text from allaboutbirds.org

Latham-Whitehurst Nature Park Checklist – May 2nd, 2020

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

| # | Species | # | Species | # | Species |
|----|---------------------------|----|-------------------------------|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Canada Goose | 22 | Great Crested Flycatcher | 43 | Eastern Towhee |
| 2 | Mourning Dove | 23 | Eastern Kingbird | 44 | White-throated Sparrow |
| 3 | Yellow-billed Cuckoo | 24 | White-eyed Vireo | 45 | Yellow-breasted Chat |
| 4 | Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 25 | Yellow-throated Vireo | 46 | Orchard Oriole |
| 5 | King Rail | 26 | Red-eyed Vireo | 47 | Red-winged Blackbird |
| 6 | Laughing Gull | 27 | Blue Jay | 48 | Brown-headed Cowbird |
| 7 | Double-crested Cormorant | 28 | American Crow | 49 | Ovenbird |
| 8 | Anhinga | 29 | Fish Crow | 50 | Prothonotary Warbler |
| 9 | Green Heron | 30 | Purple Martin | 51 | Worm-eating Warbler |
| 10 | Turkey Vulture | 31 | Northern Rough-winged Swallow | 52 | Black-and-white Warbler |
| 11 | Osprey | 32 | Carolina Chickadee | 53 | Kentucky Warbler |
| 12 | Mississippi Kite | 33 | Tufted Titmouse | 54 | Common Yellowthroat |
| 13 | Bald Eagle | 34 | White-breasted Nuthatch | 55 | Hooded Warbler |
| 14 | Red-shouldered Hawk | 35 | Brown-headed Nuthatch | 56 | Northern Parula |
| 15 | Red-tailed Hawk | 36 | Carolina Wren | 57 | Pine Warbler |
| 16 | Red-headed Woodpecker | 37 | Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | 58 | Yellow-throated Warbler |
| 17 | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 38 | Wood Thrush | 59 | Prairie Warbler |
| 18 | Downy Woodpecker | 39 | American Robin | 60 | Summer Tanager |
| 19 | Hairy Woodpecker | 40 | Gray Catbird | 61 | Northern Cardinal |
| 20 | Pileated Woodpecker | 41 | Brown Thrasher | 62 | Blue Grosbeak |
| 21 | Acadian Flycatcher | 42 | American Goldfinch | | |

Lower Neuse Bird Club

What is Birding at Baseline? – A New Adventure in Birding

by Les Coble

Birds sing, but they also have calls. Alarm calls, contact calls, companion calls, flight calls, and begging calls all make for a sound rich environment when birding, and all of course real life to the birds. Many club members have wonderful stories of real life action events they witness when birding. How can you increase the numbers of these highly memorable events? In a large group, this is almost impossible. In a small group, your chances increase. Many big sits have resulted in stories of amazing observations of birds living their lives. The relative lack of less motion by not walking through the bird's "living room" is the key in a big sit.

Getting in a condition while birding whereby the birds begin the act of feeding, talking to each other and a thousand other details of life is called the baseline. It is this condition that lends itself to your observations of the real life of birds. What they are doing, what is happening can be as enthralling as an accurate ID.

When many of us go birding, we know birds are there when we exit our vehicles by visual and sound clues. And, as we walk, these same clues lead us on to, hopefully, more ID discoveries. Have you noticed how many birds move away from your path as you take that walk? At what distance do they move out of sight? This is a bird's alarm distance. If you continue, all birds ahead of you will already be looking for you and they will fly off after further announcement of your presence to all others in the area. And so this pattern continues. We can't be patient at every stop to get to a baseline condition, but we can assess how quickly birds seek cover from alarm calls and slow or halt motion.

Jon Young is the guru of bird language. His book, "*What the Robin Tells Knows*", is an encouragement to birders to not only love learning the ID, but to get a sense of what is unfolding in that moment in the bird's life. When birding at home, I always hope a specie I have not seen on my property might be found. Knowing this is a rarity means I can place even more value in looking at what is happening. In mid-April this year, a pre-dawn shower thoroughly soaked the leaves on my trails. Walking on them was as quiet as walking on carpet in bare feet. The air, too, was totally still. In the gloom of the still gray-to-black cloud cover, few birds were moving about. At one point though, a pair of male Hooded Warblers were singing. When I found them, they were aggressively attacking each other over the trail. This seemed to be the probable territorial line. They would each cross this "line" but not attack, quickly returning to their side of the trail. Then both would fly to the trail and fly into each other with claws first, flitting up or down to maintain this sparring, then retreat to their territory. Their song was more emphatic than normal, with shorter but higher pitched notes. After a few minutes, a female moved across the line and the aggression ended. Both males retreated to their territory, and the song became more normal to my ear. The male who ended with the female on his territory did not move off to locate her.

When the male moved on, I moved on to follow and hopefully see the pair. 100' further in this dead calm weather, I did not see the pair, but overhead a light, soft note I could only feel might represent a Great Crested Flycatcher call, but I needed and wanted to see if I was close to an ID. No movement anywhere overhead. No sound.

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Welcome to the newest
member of LNBC

Nancy Piner
Oriental, NC
nancypiner@gmail.com

What is Birding at Baseline? – A New Adventure in Birding

by Les Coble, continued from Page 6

After waiting who knows how long, another step and the same short note. Still no movement in the general direction in the canopy. Then a slightly buzzy, but still very short and high pitched call that seemed to tell me I was right – the flycatcher. Another step and a few seconds later, the reep, reep, reep of the Great Crested Flycatcher confirmed the ID. But this call was sharply given, again shorter than normal were the notes. I knew I was onto something – the alarm of the flycatcher was clear to all other birds in the area that its initial notes of a threat were confirmed and was still down below. The Hooded Warbler that had started singing nearby stopped. All was silent again until I moved over 100' further. This Great Crested Flycatcher then seemed to say “all clear” with a typical wweep, wweep, wweep.

Jon Young gives an anthropomorphic description of several encounters with the Northern Cardinal. This provides a light-hearted but serious sense of both companion and contact calls. “Their basic exchange is a simple back and forth chip ... chip. While feeding and scratching under the brush they are busy, but intimately aware of each other, even though they may be fifty feet or more apart. The female chips. If the male is making too much noise and fails to reply or is busy eating a grub she may CHIP! If he still fails to reply she will quickly say CHIP! CHIP! CHIP! CHIP! The male chips. And so it continues back and forth:

Are you there?
 Yes, are you there?
 Yeah, I'm here!
 Don't do that to me!
 Sorry.
 Okay.
 Everything all right?
 Fine.
 Okay.
 Dear?
 Yes, honey?
 You still there?
 Yes, dear.
 Chip.
 Chip ... chip ... chip.

Again, anthropomorphism on my part? Only the translation of those chips. Those Cardinals, they're so codependent. One day in a mixed second-growth forest, two cardinals were feeding about 90 feet apart in the dense shrubs. The two birds were exchanging chips. It took mere seconds for an ensuing drama to unfold. The male uttered a chip, and the female did not reply in the customary time. The male immediately issued a more insistent chip-chip, a companion call asking “What's up?”. No response. I heard his wings beating furiously as he headed toward the female. At that same point in time, the female flushed in sudden flight, and behind her was a Sharp-shinned Hawk closing fast. Just as the hawk was about to reach the female, the male burst in that bright red sprint to fling himself between the female and the hawk – just amazing.

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

What is Birding at Baseline? – A New Adventure in Birding

by Les Coble, continued from Page 5

Distracted, the sharpie faltered and swerved to pursue the male, but the male had too much velocity and the sharpie could not make the turn-on-a-dime maneuver to pull off the kill. The female was now also in the brush. The sharpie landed on a branch, gave up on the Cardinals and glided off in pursuit of other prey.

I was stunned. This was one of the most powerful scenes involving birds I had ever witnessed, an incredible act of courage, as we would define it. What can't be challenged is the lesson I learned about companion calls for maintaining that bond between Cardinals. When the male's chip went unanswered, his chip ... chip asked a question. When the answer was not forthcoming, he took action, and just in the nick of time. Almost without a doubt, the missing return companion call had saved the female's life."

Playing bird songs disrupts the life of all birds in the area, but that is a topic of ever-growing concern for another day. For today, make it a challenge to see how much is happening with and among the birds as you walk (or sit) for glimpses of the color that flies, then go home and enjoy the flowers.

Eastern Screech-owl (red phase) – Oriental, NC

*Courtesy of Liz Lathrop
Photo ©Greg Perry*



Photo Gallery



Left: Bobolink, Rt. 1341, Craven County, 4/29/20
Right: Bronzed Cowbird, Ronnie Hewlette's yard, 5/4/20
Both photos ©Ronnie Hewlette



Submissions Welcome!

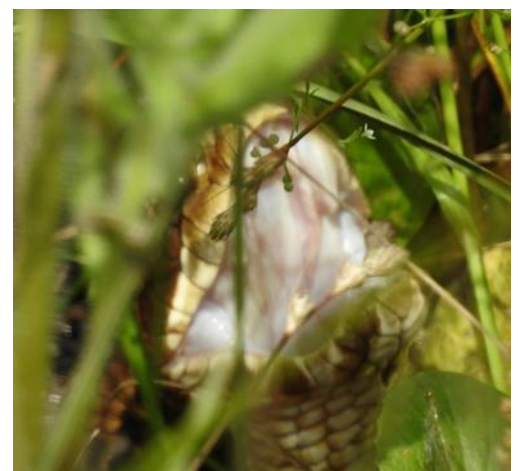
If you have any photographs or articles you wish to have published in the Lower Neuse Bird Club Newsletter, please email your submissions to:

lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com



Birthday Party for Al Gamache (LNBC Co-President)

Cottonmouth (*Agkistrodon piscivorus*), North River Preserve
©Christine Stoughton-Root June 6, 2020



Lower Neuse Bird Club

Photo Gallery



All photos on this page from Camp Brinson, ©Michael Creedon, 5/12/20

Top left: Worm-eating Warbler

Middle left: Indigo Bunting (1st-year plumage)

Bottom, left to right: Eastern Wood-Pewee, Blue Grosbeak, Black-throated Green Warbler

Photo Gallery



*White-winged
Tern*

Cape Hatteras NS

©Ronnie Hewlette
5/30/20



*Timber Rattlesnake
(Crotalus horridus)*

Cape Hatteras NS

©Ronnie Hewlette 5/30/20



*Gray Catbird
6/14/20*

©Michael Cheves

Coming in September...

The first issue of Volume 29 of the LNBC Newsletter will feature the write-up of the club's trip to North River Wetlands Preserve during the first weekend in June. Also, look forward to articles from Les Coble, *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and more!