

Lower Neuse Bird Club

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Correction to last month's newsletter:

The email address for the New
Bern Wild Birds Unlimited
store was incorrectly printed.
The correct email address is:
Wbunewbern@gmail.com

Thank you to Jura Hill for
submitting the correction.

Upcoming Bird Walks

The following socially-distanced bird walks are planned for the rest of the 2020-2021 Program Year. Unless otherwise announced, rendezvous will be at the Bridge Pointe Hotel in downtown New Bern at 7:00 AM.

- Nov. 7: Lawson Creek & Simmons St. Wetlands
- Nov. 10-11: Pea Island NWR
- Dec. 5: Pamlico County ponds
- Dec. 14: **Christmas Bird Count** (New Bern: Contact Wade Fuller 252-229-8012 or wade@fullersmusic.com)
- Jan. 9: New Bern Area Waterfowl
- Feb. 6: Lake Mattamuskeet NWR/Lake Phelps/Lake Pungo
- March 6: Fort Macon SP
- April 3: Southern Croatan NF (Patsy's Pond/Pringle Rd/Millis Rd)
- May 1: Goose Creek SP
- Mid May (TBD): Camp Brinson
- June 5: North River Wetlands Preserve

LNBC Membership Dues

by Christine Stoughton Root

The pandemic has had many organized groups somewhat disorganized for the past 1/2-year, and struggling with that club's goals and objectives for the next 1/2-year. For now, let's ignore the lack of LNBC meetings and ask the question a member of any organization must ask themselves when expected benefits are greatly reduced. Why should I join/re-join "X" Association? Your elected officials struggled with this, and learned some groups have reduced dues, while others kept the same renewal level with the defined goal that unused funds would allow increased donations to oft considered 501-3c groups. Increasing donations is the plan by your leadership. It will immeasurably help struggling environmental/bird related activities of those organizations and allow you, the member, to receive the Newsletter and emails of activities in which we can most safely participate. For more details about the LNBC budget, see the treasurer's report on Page 6 of this newsletter.

In addition to sending your dues to the LNBC Treasurer, Christine Stoughton Root, it would be fun to hear, in a short paragraph, your fun sightings each month. Email your sightings to the Newsletter Editor at lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com, and your sighting will be published in the upcoming newsletter.

Dues are \$15 per person. Checks should be made payable to LNBC. Please be sure to notify Christine of any changes to your contact information. Dues should be mailed to:

*Christine Stoughton Root
651 Quail Rd.
Merritt, NC 28556*

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Trip Report – Martin Marietta Park, Sept. 19

by Ronnie Hewlette

Here I sit, listening to the rain softly fall. You know, the kind of rain that doesn't get you really wet in a hurry; just enough to wet the windshield or to hear it pitter-pat on an umbrella. But it has been raining steadily since early this morning. It is two days until the Lower Neuse Bird Club plans to visit the Quarry (Martin Marietta Park) in New Bern. Why am I contemplating what is to come, you might ask... Well, between now and Saturday morning, the remnants of Hurricane Sally (out of the Gulf of Mexico) are expected to blow through Eastern North Carolina. There's a Flood Watch for our area from now until Friday at 11:00 AM (2-4 inches of rainfall expected). The winds will begin to pick up Friday afternoon out of the NNE and are expected to be 10-20 MPH Saturday, continuing through Monday. This has certainly got to have an impact on the fall migrants headed our way, if not this weekend, then surely by next weekend. It will be interesting to compare, a second trip to the Quarry that is planned for the following weekend!

Now, flash forward to Saturday, September 19th. The Lower Neuse Bird Club kicks off its second Bird-Walk of the fall with a trip to Martin Marietta Park – the old Quarry. Eleven Birders gathered at the gate to the Park around 7:00 AM, and a couple of newcomers caught up with us later. The winds are a little brisk but not too bad at this point. Cooler temperatures are around 65°F and we have dull gray, overcast skies.

First sightings are Mockingbirds, of course, several Osprey, and a lone adult Bald Eagle. Lots of Laughing Gulls (headed to the landfill) and a smattering of Chimney Swifts are seen in the dull sky above. Very few birds are moving in this somewhat open area, as we walk past the new kayak launch, restrooms, and picnic area that the city has recent constructed. As we get to the wooded area along the canal that leads out to the river, several female Redstarts are sighting moving about from tree to tree. Just out of the wooded path, we spot several Northern Parula and a few Pine Warblers. This little corner seems to always be productive, as we see more Parulas, a couple of Cardinals, a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and most unexpectedly, a Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Continuing our trek around the quarry lake, a Pied-billed Grebe and numerous Double-crested Cormorants are seen on the water. Along the back marsh, on the North side, we heard a couple of King Rails as they responded to our calls. The Quarry offers such a diversity of habitat! Wetlands, marsh, grasslands, woodlands, scrub areas and thickets of all sorts. It's no wonder we see such a diversity of birds, including water birds, waders and marsh birds, raptors, gulls and terns, woodpeckers, passerines (songbirds) and more, depending on the season. Next weeks' list could include a totally different mix of species! As we near the eagle nest-site, at least two eagles, maybe three, were located and viewed through somewhat of a tunnel through the brush along the side of the trail; one or two in the nest and another on a limb nearby. As we move along, one eagle flies off, crossing the path ahead of us. What a sight!

Trip Report – Martin Marietta Park, Sept. 19, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #2

Several other birds are seen along the way Forster’s Tern, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Brown Thrasher, more Chimney Swifts, a couple of Wood Ducks and a Killdeer flyover. Our species list continues to grow, and as we move along to complete the three-mile loop, we pick up Canada Geese flying just above the water’s surface, on the far side of the quarry, west of the causeway. Tree Swallows, a Barn Swallow, a Great Egret flyover, and an Eastern Bluebird on the powerline wrap up the tally.

We did not find any Yellow Warblers, or Common Yellowthroats, although there were a couple of birds along the way that may have been Yellowthroats, but nothing definitive enough to make the call. The wind certainly did make for an interesting morning. We made the entire loop in just about three hours and finished with a total count of 37 species for the morning. What a wonderful place to go birding! Grateful to the New Bern Parks & Recreation Department for their vision in developing without disturbing this area!

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
1	Canada Goose	13	Turkey Vulture	25	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
2	Wood Duck	14	Osprey	26	Carolina Wren
3	Pied-billed Grebe	15	Sharp-shinned Hawk	27	European Starling
4	Mourning Dove	16	Bald Eagle	28	Brown Thrasher
5	Chimney Swift	17	Red-shouldered Hawk	29	Northern Mockingbird
6	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	18	Red-bellied Woodpecker	30	Eastern Bluebird
7	King Rail	19	Downy Woodpecker	31	American Robin
8	Killdeer	20	Blue Jay	32	Red-winged Blackbird
9	Laughing Gull	21	crow sp.	33	Common Grackle
10	Forster's Tern	22	Carolina Chickadee	34	American Redstart
11	Double-crested Cormorant	23	Tree Swallow	35	Northern Parula
12	Great Egret	24	Barn Swallow	36	Pine Warbler
				37	Northern Cardinal



Left: LNBC at the Quarry, Sept. 19, 2020
©Ronnie Hewlette

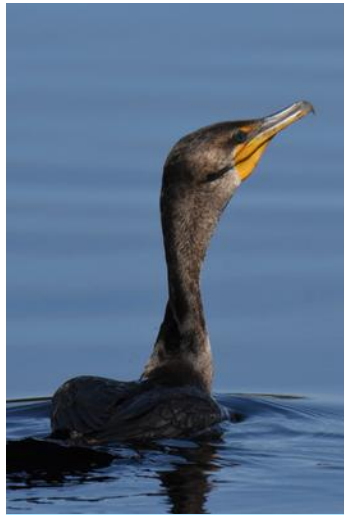
Right: Pine Warbler at the Quarry, Sept. 19, 2020
©Mike Creedon



Lower Neuse Bird Club

Trip Report – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 3, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette



According to a June 29, 2016 press release by the US-FWS, the Double-crested

Cormorant is a goose-sized waterbird native to North America. It is one of six species of cormorant in North America and one of 38 species worldwide. This black or grayish-black bird is about three feet long with a wingspan of 4.5-feet, and has a hooked bill and powerful webbed feet that are used for swimming underwater. An adult weighs about five pounds. This species gets its name from the tufted feathers on both sides of the head, referred to as “crests”, that are present only during nesting season.

Double-crested Cormorants are widely distributed in North America. The waterbird is usually found in flocks along the coast and inland on lakes, rivers, and other water bodies. The largest concentrations of Double-crested Cormorants in the United States are found on the Great Lakes.

Text by Ronnie Hewlette
Photo ©Michael Cheves

Well, the planned visit by the Lower Neuse Bird Club to the Quarry (Martin Marietta Park) in New Bern, on September 26th, was canceled due to expected bad weather. The next weekend, on October 3rd, the trip to the Quarry was rescheduled, planning to walk the 3-mile loop, in hopes of seeing more warblers as they migrate through, on their way South.

Ten LNBC Members, hosted by Les Coble, met at the Quarry Entrance gate at 7:00 AM. We immediately encountered warblers and other birds in the first 300 feet into the park. Magnolia Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, several American Redstarts (Females: “Yellowstarts”) and the usually abundant Mockingbirds, Blue Jays, and our first Osprey of the day.

The City of New Bern has been continuing to make improvements at the Quarry, as we notice changes to the landscape from our earlier trip, just two weeks ago. Approaching the new restrooms, we moved over to the canal side, looking and listening for birds in the trees and brush. Our first Kingfisher flew over, and we found more Redstarts, a couple of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers chasing each other around, and a couple of Catbirds. Something flushed several Mourning Doves from the trees, as they seemed to explode from the thicket, zipping right over us!

The walk down to the spillway, then to the old gate at the beginning of the “tunnel” alongside the canal turned up very little, but we did hear a Brown Thrasher “smacking” in the thicket on our right. Les spotted a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in a tree by the gate, then a second Cuckoo in the same tree. As we stood in place, several Brown Thrasher moved about, all around us, and an American Goldfinch was spotted in a treetop. The walk along the canal was surprisingly quiet. This has normally been a good place for warblers, or for all birds for that matter. As we came out into the open at the far end, we heard a roaring that made us almost jump to the side of the trail in anticipation of whatever vehicle was approaching. Turned out, it was a Bass-boat, flying along the canal waters, back toward the river. Maybe there was a fishing tournament going on!

At the corner of the quarry-lake on our left, where the trail makes a turn to the left, Les spotted an immature or female Black-throated Blue Warbler, a juvenile Indigo Bunting, and a couple of Common Yellowthroats. We started seeing Northern Parulas (lots of them), and Magnolia Warblers, as we moved along the trail, with the lake on our left and the river/marsh on our right.

Lots of birds are in the trees and brush, but getting a good look was a challenge! We had a Cape May Warbler on a tree branch over our heads as Les Pursued what might have been a Kentucky Warbler, but it was at an odd angle, and he could not confirm it with any other field marks other than a yellow underside, as it never turned around. So it goes...

Early in the morning, a couple of bands of Double-crested Cormorants were seen flying over us, following the river. Several more were counted on the water, as they periodically dove for their dietary mainstay of fish. Double-crested Cormorants are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Under the Act, the US Fish & Wildlife Service implements conventions between the United States and four neighboring countries (Canada, Mexico, Russia, and Japan) for the protection of shared migratory birds.

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Trip Report – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 3, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #4

And speaking of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a proposed rule to codify the Department of the Interior's legal opinion (M-37050) regarding the governing of "take" of birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. This proposed rule clarifies that the scope of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act only reaches to conduct intentionally injuring birds. Conduct that results in the unintentional (incidental) injury or death of migratory birds is not prohibited under the Act. This change has not been adopted, but is currently going through a hearing process for consideration.

Moving on – While we viewed the Cormorants on the water, three Pied-billed Grebes were observed. At a distance, they both may appear to have long necks and sit low in the water. However, the Grebes weigh less than a pound, have a short, stout, pied (having two or more different colors) bill and a white rump that is often noticeable.

As the back-side marsh came into view, we saw two adult Bald Eagles in the dead cypress where eagles have nested for several years. One was on the nest and the second one was on a nearby limb. Great sight, even at a distance!

There were several Northern Flickers flying back and forth. In a purposeful attempt to not overcount these, we carefully tallied 6 individuals, if not more, during our walk. Mockingbirds took the prize for abundance, coming in at a conservative count of 29.

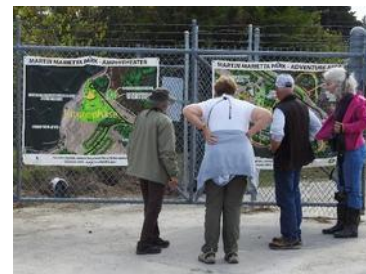
It was a great day for birding, with overcast, cloudy skies and comfortable temps, with a lighter than expected NE wind. As the morning progressed, it warmed up from the mid-50's to the mid to upper 60's.

As we approached the large white storage tank a little over halfway around the loop, we heard a House Wren in the thicket on our right. A bit past the tank while listening for another House Wren, a Marsh Wren was heard calling ahead of us. These little guys are really difficult to spot, and hearing them is often the only way to know they are present. It is a rewarding moment when you actually see either of these birds.

At the edge of the marsh, adjacent to the lake on our left, we spotted an Eastern Phoebe in a small tree. Had to put a scope on it to correctly identify it because it was so far out, and it is small and can easily be mistaken for any of the other small Flycatchers. This was the first of this species seen by a few of us since last spring. The range maps show that the Eastern Phoebe is found in North Carolina, year-round, except for near the coast, where they have only a winter presence. Understandably, you could see these in our area at most any time, but it was still good to see this one.

As we approached the causeway between the two lakes, a flock of Palm Warblers bustled about in the low trees just ahead of us. Total count of Palm Warblers for the day turned out to be 13, and most of them were right here, all at one time. Wow!

As we turned and headed back across the causeway, back to the entrance, one Yellow Warbler was seen. It was timely to finally see one of this bird, since they are considered to be early migrants and so far, this fall, they have been sparse around here.



Lower Neuse Bird Club

Trip Report – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 3, 2020

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #5

We tallied a total of 46 species for the morning. That number includes 9 different warblers, with a high count of 14 Northern Parulas and 13 Palm Warblers! The list can be found on [eBird](#) if you are interested in the details. We walked about 3 miles in around 3.5 hours. Happy Birding!

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
1	Canada Goose	16	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	31	Northern Mockingbird
2	Pied-billed Grebe	17	Eastern Phoebe	32	American Robin
3	Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)	18	Blue Jay	33	American Goldfinch
4	Mourning Dove	19	American Crow	34	Red-winged Blackbird
5	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	20	Fish Crow	35	Common Grackle
6	Laughing Gull	21	crow sp.	36	Common Yellowthroat
7	Double-crested Cormorant	22	Carolina Chickadee	37	American Redstart
8	Great Egret	23	Tree Swallow	38	Cape May Warbler
9	Turkey Vulture	24	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	39	Northern Parula
10	Osprey	25	House Wren	40	Magnolia Warbler
11	Bald Eagle	26	Marsh Wren	41	Yellow Warbler
12	Belted Kingfisher	27	Carolina Wren	42	Chestnut-sided Warbler
13	Red-bellied Woodpecker	28	European Starling	43	Black-throated Blue Warbler
14	Downy Woodpecker	29	Gray Catbird	44	Palm Warbler
15	Pileated Woodpecker	30	Brown Thrasher	45	Northern Cardinal
				46	Indigo Bunting

LNBC Treasurer's Report

by Christine Stoughton Root

Balance as of August 2020: \$975.53

Expenses: Web page -\$125.39

Income: 21 Dues \$315

Current Balance: \$1165.14

We lost no money due to Covid-19 so far. In October of 2019 we had a balance of \$908.

Newest Member

Please welcome new member **Leigh Hart** to the Lower Neuse Bird Club! Ms. Hart is from New Bern. Her e-mail address is dol123@mac.com



My Yard Is for the Birds

by Mark Plunkett

Reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* March/April 2020, with permission.

See birdwatchersdigest.com

When I was a young man, I listened as Joni Mitchell cried out that we “don’t know what we’ve got till it’s gone.” Her lament that they “paved paradise and put up a parking lot” resonated with many baby boomers. Perhaps you are more familiar with the Counting Crows cover of “Big Yellow Taxi”. No matter the version, the words of the song continue to speak to those of us who are concerned that we are losing the birds and the bees.

I am no longer that young man, and I have come to realize that in modern suburbia, we haven’t paved paradise with concrete so much as with vast expanses of turf grass. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, lawns have surpassed croplands as the most extensive managed landscape in this country. Though this approach to suburban landscape may be somewhat more visually appealing than concrete, it doesn’t provide much more welcome space for birds and other wildlife than a parking lot does.

Many species of wildlife are experiencing decreasing populations because their “homes” are disappearing (both the places and the plants). What I haven’t always seen so clearly is that the home of wildlife is also my home. More often I have conceived of the proper habitat for wildlife to be “out there”. Even when, in times past, I looked out over the broad expanse of lawn in front of my home and didn’t see much in the way of wildlife, I wasn’t concerned because I had assigned the need for conservation of birds and other wildlife to the professionals. That’s why we fund nature preserves and parks, I thought.

But I was living in a world not grounded in reality. The world is rapidly becoming more urban. It is becoming clear that if we are going to provide suitable habitat for birds and other wildlife, we need to incorporate it into our urban and suburban landscapes. How do we do that? Where will it happen? To begin with, it needs to happen in our yards. The fact is that individually owned private property (our yards) accounts for 25 to 35 percent of the landscape and nearly half of the total green space in urban areas. Though our yards cover a relatively small amount of land compared with the total land area on Earth, they can have a significant impact on the biodiversity of our cities and suburbs. The power to provide suitable habitat for birds is in our hands.

A little research into recent scientific publications showed me that the fragmented landscape of my suburban neighborhood did not need to be lifeless. It is possible to have rich and abundant bird life in my community. Even in my yard. Even without a feeder.

Growing suburbs reduce native vegetation and sever connections between natural areas. However, suburban growth can also have some benefits for birds and other wildlife by providing places to hide from predators, increasing the available water, supplementing food resources, providing new nest sites, and increasing diversity. Many studies have been done on the impact of urbanization on bird populations. Although it may seem reasonable to predict that the variety and number of birds will continually decrease as one moves from the relatively undisturbed forest through the exurbs and suburbs to the urban core, the evidence does not support this assumption.

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

My Yard Is for the Birds

by Mark Plunkett. Continued from Page #7.

Reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* March/April 2020, with permission.

See birdwatchersdigest.com



A Hermit Thrush feeds on sumac fruit at the Battlefield Park in New Bern.

December 13, 2018
©Michael Cheves

Suburbs can provide suitable habitat for birds because there are more “edges” and more intermediate disturbance that works to increase the diversity of bird populations. There is also a greater diversity of food, some of which is the result of homeowners who provide bird feeders, but much of which is created by the choices of home gardeners who plant gardens full of a variety of native plants to attract birds to their yards.

Native plants support significantly greater bird abundance, diversity, and species richness as compared with exotic plants or turf grass. They also have a positive influence on reproduction. Making the landscape more similar to native habitat by adding layers and increasing the diversity of plants while discouraging empty lawn are steps we can all take to encourage a greater variety of wildlife in our communities – including birds.

As I slowly came to realize the contribution I could make toward providing a welcoming habitat for birds in my neighborhood, I began to replace most of the lawn surrounding my home with gardens. These are not just pretty still-life gardens, but rather gardens that support all kinds of life. I planted seed-bearing plants for the birds – Echinacea and *Rudbeckia maxima* (giant coneflower) and other prairie plants such as prairie dock, cup plant, and ashy sunflowers. I planted viburnums and winterberry hollies, as well as serviceberry trees to provide edible fruit for the birds. I also planted native plants that attract pollinators, which will also provide insects the birds will need to raise their young.

We can all have a yard that is for the birds and thereby create a better habitat for them. If you are uncertain about how to start improving your own yard or which specific native plants will be most appropriate in your community, start with the Audubon Native Plants Database (<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds/>). It will provide a list of plants native to your zip code so you can begin planting for the birds no matter where you live.

As concerned bird watchers and homeowners, we have a tremendous opportunity (and responsibility) to provide welcoming habitats for birds and other wildlife. If we do so, and others follow our example in breaking with tradition and converting even just a little bit of lawn into native gardens, it will have a significant effect on our suburban environment. As this view of our yards spreads, we will no longer need to worry about the need to pay to see a “tree museum” but will be able to do much of our bird watching right outside the doors of our homes.

Mark Plunkett is a master gardener and active member of both the local chapters of Audubon and Wild Ones organizations. He and wife Nan garden and watch birds in Cincinnati, Ohio.