



# Lower Neuse Bird Club

Editor: Michael Cheves, LowerNeuseBirdClub@gmail.com

## LNBC Monthly Bird Walk – Saturday, April 3, 2021 Patsy's Pond [Area]

by Les Coble

Spring is here! For April, we will travel to an area we seldom visit – a coastal birding site that is a savanna habitat. Following is the description from the NC Birding Trail web site:

“The Patsy Pond Nature Trail is part of the Croatan National Forest, and winds through an open woodland of longleaf pine forest. Visitors have three trail options, a 0.75-mile trail loop, a 1.5-mile trail loop, or a 2.5-mile trail loop. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers can be found here year-round. Look for active cavity trees marked with blue bands. Also present are Wild Turkey, Red-headed Woodpecker, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler and other species associated with longleaf pine forest. Signs along the 1.5-mile trail pertain to the self-guided tour brochure.

We will meet at 7:00 AM at the Food Lion in James City, near the Williams Road corner. For those coming off Rt. 70/17 from New Bern/Bridgeton, Williams Road is the first traffic light. Turn right at the light, drive past the service road and then turn right into the parking lot. Here is a link to Patsy Pond – [Patsy Pond Nature Trail \(Coastal Federation\)](#)

The trails are sandy and dry; that is, very few, if any, wet areas. Water resistant shoes are always the best choice.

Use this address to find the Kiosk at the trail head – 3614 NC-24, Newport, NC. It is a small parking lot on the Morehead City side of the adjacent plumbing business. It is quite unremarkable. Just slow down and look for the break in the road shoulder **immediately** before the business entrance. Again, it is a small parking area, so leave room for others.

### Club Officers

#### Co-Presidents

Wade Fuller  
Ronnie Hewlette  
Les Coble (410-829-5501)

#### Secretary

Jura Hill

#### Treasurer

Christine Stoughton Root  
252-269-6306

#### Field Trips

Al Gamache  
675-8376

#### Newsletter Editor

Michael Cheves  
252-670-1238

#### Refreshments Captain

Sally Rowe  
514-2822



Monarch Butterfly (male)

©Michael Cheves

## Mexico's Magical Migrations: Monarchs & Humpbacks

by JoAnne Powell

The Friends of the Maritime Museum, Beaufort, is partnering with EcoQuest Travel to offer a trip to witness two of nature's greatest spectacles – the wintering monarch butterflies and humpback whales in Mexico. There should be some good birding in the mountains and at the coast as well. This 10-day natural history and archaeological experience is scheduled to depart January 10th, 2022. The cost is \$4,455.00 plus international airfare. For a complete itinerary and registration details go to [www.maritimefriends.org](http://www.maritimefriends.org) (click: Get Involved; International Travel) or contact JoAnne Powell, trip leader, at [joannepowell1208@gmail.com](mailto:joannepowell1208@gmail.com) or Dave Davenport, EcoQuest director, at (919) 963-3038 or at [INFO@ECOQUESTTRAVEL.NET](mailto:INFO@ECOQUESTTRAVEL.NET).

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

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### 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. Dues cover our year of club activities, which start in September and continue through June.

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*  
458 Country Club Drive West  
Arapahoe, NC 28510

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### North Carolina Bird Atlas Project

*by Christine Stoughton Root*

As you may have heard, we have lost 2.9 billion birds nationwide since 1970. Even common species have declined, such as the Dark-eyed Junco and the White-throated Sparrow. Can we make a difference?

A bird atlas is a systematic survey of an entire region, in this case North Carolina. The first step is having a detailed picture of birds and what they depend on to be healthy in the state. Through the North Carolina Bird Atlas, we gather this essential information. This is a state-wide project of collecting that information. The state has been divided into Priority Blocks. Volunteers adopt a block and this is where they concentrate their efforts. Many of you may actually be living in a priority block. Birders of ALL experience are welcome to the project.

Below is the link to the NC Bird Atlas 101-How to get started

<https://ncbirdatlas.org/nc-bird-atlas-101-how-to-get-started/>

This video may seem a bit overwhelming, and that is where I come in. I have volunteered to work with the District 2 team, and what this means is I will assist anyone to get started or along the way as needed. Additional link "Plan to Participate" provides block information and much more:

<https://ncbirdatlas.org/how-can-i-help/plan-to-participate>

If you have any interest/questions, or require any assistance, please feel free to call me at 252-269-6306.

Thank you for considering. I believe we can make a difference.

Christine



## LNBC – Fort Macon & Beaufort Area Bird Walk – March 6, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird Club's First-Saturday Bird Walk for March experienced a gorgeous but somewhat brisk day for a look at the trails, beaches and waterways around Beaufort and Fort Macon.

A small group of birders met at the BridgePointe Motel parking lot and departed at 7:00 AM, driving to meet the larger group at the Fort Macon State Park Visitor's Center, where we started our bird walk. Our group of 21 tried to split up into two smaller groups to facilitate better communications and opportunities. Starting at the Visitor's Center bird feeders, we found Grackles, Cardinals, Mourning Doves, House Sparrows, a Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Chickadees, and a Song Sparrow. As we moved over toward the pond, one group encountered a Prairie Warbler at the edge of the parking lot. Nice sign of things to come – spring migration will be upon us, soon!

Moving along the Elliott Coues Trail, we found more Grackles including some Boat-tailed, a Gray Catbird, Sparrows, Carolina Wrens and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Where the trail intersected with the access road at the Coast Guard Station we turned and walked up the road shoulder to the WWII Gun Emplacement. From here, we continued along the trail leading out to the Beaufort Inlet beach and the old rock jetty.

At the beach, with a brisk wind at our backs we set up to scan the beach and nearby waters. Just offshore, we found Red-throated Loons, a few Common Loons, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls and a Red-breasted Merganser that was a topic for discussion as we tried to make out the field marks for a positive identity. A single Ruddy Turnstone was seen flying in, just as we were leaving. Wade got a picture of a large gull out on the beach that was determined to be a Lesser Black-backed Gull. No Razorbills or Dovekies turned up, but you never know what might be there!

From here, we moved over to the Fort Macon Beach Bathhouse & beach access. We had hoped to locate sparrows in the area behind the bathhouses, but few were found. Out on the end of the boardwalk, we again scanned the beach and nearby waters. There were 6-7 Laughing Gulls with their full black heads, mixed in with 50-100 Ring-billed Gulls. Several Red-throated Loons were seen nearby and apparently many more, farther out (too far for a conclusive ID). Way, way out, behind a large boat, we sighted 35-50 Northern Gannet, diving head-first into the water. No question about this ID, with observation of that manner of diving. As we returned to our vehicles, we spotted two Northern Harriers soaring overhead, and on top of a grassy sand dune, an immature Cooper's Hawk was spotted. The identification of this Cooper's was a bit challenging, since we could only see its upper body and head. That challenge is one of the reasons it is so enjoyable to go birding with a group – confirming or differing viewpoints from several individuals to arrive at a consensus – always looking for something unusual that you may encounter.

Wrapping up at this stop, we headed over to a pond in a newly developed subdivision in Beaufort, in search of a Ross's Goose (small white goose with a stubby orange-red bill). This species is considered a rare find in this area, and has been reported at this location since late February.

### Upcoming Bird Walks for April & May

*April 3: Patsy's Pond Nature Trail (see front page)*

*May 1: Goose Creek State Park, Washington, NC*

*May (bonus trip, date TBD): Camp Brinson, Croatan NF*



LNBC Members at the Fort Macon State Park beach

3/6/21

©Ronnie Hewlette

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC – Fort Macon & Beaufort Area Bird Walk – March 6, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #3

As our 12-car caravan approached the reported spot, we were rewarded with finding the Ross's Goose mixed in with several Canada Geese. This individual seemed almost tame, as it did not hurry to move away from us as we stood on the curb and snapped photos.



Ross's Goose, Beaufort, NC, 3/6/21  
©Ronnie Hewlette



Ross's Goose next to Canada  
Goose  
Beaufort, NC, 3/6/21  
©Michael Cheves

How rare is this bird in our area? Based on eBird maps, this one in Beaufort, along with the Ross's Goose that the LNBC found at the Bayboro Water Treatment Ponds (12-01-18) and another one reported at the Cedar Island Ferry Terminal (12/5/17) makes for a total of three that have been reported in our immediate area (Craven-Carteret-Pamlico). The bird's rare status makes it "Bird of the Day" – nice, unexpected find! Life bird for some?

From here, the caravan headed over to the Hwy-70 Bypass in search of the Sandhill Cranes, and possibly some waterfowl near the fields where the cranes have been seen off and on. The cranes were not found, nor were the waterfowl, but several American Kestrels and Red-tailed Hawks were spotted. One Red-tailed Hawk attracted a lot of attention since it appeared at times (as it soared overhead) to resemble a Rough-legged Hawk or possibly a Krider's sub-species of the Red-tailed Hawk. In the end, we concluded it was a Red-tailed Hawk, best we could do...

We drove from here, along the side of the road (Hwy-70), back toward the high-rise bridge, past the Hwy-101 intersection and through the next traffic light. Turning right, just across from Town Creek Marina, we followed the road around to a parking area, adjacent to Gallant's Channel. This is the site of the NC Maritime Museum's Gallants Channel Property. Gallant's Channel connects Taylor Creek (Beaufort Waterfront) with Harlowe Creek and the ICW, running north toward Adam's Creek, across from Oriental, NC.

The Gallants Channel Nature Trail runs  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile around the perimeter of the Museum's Gallants Channel property. The entire tract was the Harvey Smith Fishmeal Plant in the 1950s and 1960s and all the forest seen today has grown since the plant closed in the 1980s (<https://maritimefriends.org/gallants-channel-nature-trail>).

We walked to the end of the boat dock and found several Tricolored Herons, White Ibis and Great Blue Herons on the far side of the channel. Five American Oystercatchers flew overhead, flashing the boldly patterned black and white wings as they joined another group on the top of an old sunken barge. There were eleven in all, a large number, according to the eBird app.

After walking one of the short trails into the woods, we returned to the parking lot and the group broke up and headed home, with some making additional stops at Radio Island, Old Causeway Road and the Pond on Old Airport Road.

Thanks to Jeannie Kraus and Carol Reigle for leading us through the morning's stops. It was a great day!



## Checklist – Fort Macon & Beaufort Area – March 6, 2021

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
1	Ross's Goose	23	Brown Pelican	45	Carolina Wren
2	Canada Goose	24	Great Blue Heron	46	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
3	American Wigeon	25	Tricolored Heron	47	Eastern Bluebird
4	Mallard	26	White Ibis	48	European Starling
5	Redhead	27	Black Vulture	49	American Robin
6	Ring-necked Duck	28	Turkey Vulture	50	Gray Catbird
7	Red-breasted Merganser	29	Northern Harrier	51	Northern Mockingbird
8	Ruddy Duck	30	Sharp-shinned Hawk	52	House Finch
9	Rock Pigeon	31	Cooper's Hawk	53	American Goldfinch
10	Mourning Dove	32	Bald Eagle	54	Chipping Sparrow
11	American Oystercatcher	33	Red-tailed Hawk	55	Savannah Sparrow
12	Killdeer	34	Belted Kingfisher	56	Song Sparrow
13	Sanderling	35	Northern Flicker	57	White-throated Sparrow
14	Laughing Gull	36	Red-bellied Woodpecker	58	House Sparrow
15	Ring-billed Gull	37	Downy Woodpecker	59	Brown-headed Cowbird
16	Herring Gull	38	American Kestrel	60	Common Grackle
17	Lesser Black-backed Gull	39	Eastern Phoebe	61	Boat-tailed Grackle
18	Great Black-backed Gull	40	Blue Jay	62	Pine Warbler
19	Red-throated Loon	41	American Crow	63	Yellow-rumped Warbler
20	Common Loon	42	Carolina Chickadee	64	Prairie Warbler
21	Northern Gannet	43	Tufted Titmouse	65	Northern Cardinal
22	Double-crested Cormorant	44	Brown-headed Nuthatch		

### Scope-purchasing Advice

by Pete Dunne

Reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* January/February 2021, with permission.

See [birdwatchersdigest.com](http://birdwatchersdigest.com)

At some point, many birders opt to bolster their optical array by investing in a spotting scope. Used primarily to study distant, often unapproachable birds, spotting scopes are invaluable aids when it comes to identifying shorebirds, distant waterfowl, and perched raptors.

Choosing a scope necessitates making several key decisions: Straight vs. angled eyepieces? Large or smaller objective lens? Fixed magnification or zoom eyepiece? Regular optical glass or the more expensive ED, HD, or APO models that offer a better image, particularly in low light conditions? Knob or helical (barrel-ringed) focus?

There are no right or wrong answers, but here are my recommendations.

Angled eyepieces offer more comfortable long-term viewing insofar as your (open) subordinate eye will be looking at the ground, so not likely to compete with your viewing eye.

Larger objective lens instruments have a larger exit pupil. If you plan to take pictures through the scope, it's easier to align your camera. But the larger objective lenses are heavier. A scope so heavy you leave it in the car stops being an asset.

Zoom lenses are the way to go. When you crank up the magnification, you reduce the field of view, which, in the case of backlit subjects, means you get less peripheral light, thus allowing you to see color and detail instead of a silhouette.

Regular optical glass or the expensive stuff? Get the good stuff if you can afford it. If you don't, you will spend the rest of your birding life second-guessing your decision.

Focus systems must be accessible and responsive. Helical rings show their merit in cold weather because they can be easily moved with a mittened hand, but they sometimes do not provide the pinpoint focus that instruments offering a dual (coarse and fine) focus system offer.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all: Do not cut corners on the tripod. The tripod is the literal foundation of image quality. Expect to purchase a lightweight carbon fiber tripod with a smooth panning head that is directed by a single handle (i.e., a video head). Photographers want tripod heads that have lots of levers and knobs. Birders want simplicity; one hand does everything.

Test before you buy.

*Pete Dunne is the retired director of the Cape May Bird Observatory, founder of the World Series of Birding, and author of dozens of books on birding.*

*Please check out the scopes at [RedstartBirding.com](http://RedstartBirding.com), BWD's online retail store. In-person optics-testing will be available in Asheville, NC on April 27, 2021. To schedule an appointment or a bird walk, visit [Redstart On The Road](http://RedstartOnTheRoad.com).*



## New Club Member!

Please welcome Jenni Ford from New Bern, the newest member of the Lower Neuse Bird Club! We were very happy to have her join us for the Fort Macon/Beaufort Bird Walk in March.



## Photo Gallery

Submissions welcome! Send your nature photos to:  
[lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com)



*Waving good-bye to winter!*  
*White-throated Sparrow, New Bern, NC*  
*3/25/21*  
*©Michael Cheves*



*Savannah Sparrow*  
*Fort Macon SP, 3/6/21*  
*©Christine Stoughton-Root*



*Louisiana Waterthrush*  
*Croatan NF—Catfish Lake Rd., bridge at Brice's Creek*  
*East Prong, 3/22/21*  
*©Ronnie Hewlette*



*Carolina Chickadee, carrying nesting material*  
*New Bern, NC 3/25/21*  
*©Michael Cheves*