

Lower Neuse Bird Club

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LNBC Outer Banks Trip Nov. 10-11

by Les Coble

Our overnight field trip to Pea Island is coming up fast. **Members planning to make this trip will need to make their reservation at the Comfort Inn South (252-441-6315).** We will rendezvous in Chocowinity. Please be at the Beaufort County Rest Stop by 7:30 AM (5514 US-17, Chocowinity, NC). This is easily found as it is just past the point at which Rt. 17 becomes a 4-lane divided highway when traveling north toward Washington, and about a mile before the Chocowinity exit. We do not wish to leave anyone behind. Please let Ronnie Hewlette or Wade Fuller know if you will be at the Rest Stop. Ronnie: 252-229-6380. Wade: 252-229-8012.

We have done this trip for many years. As you will see, there is much more to it than our visit to Pea Island. Ducks are king at Pea Island, but we can see them at most stops.

We will start at the Rest Stop and caravan to the Vernon James State Research Farm near Roper. This site has the largest concentration of Bald Eagles in North Carolina. Thereafter the stops vary each year dependent on what is being reported and what conditions we are experiencing. Stops may include some Catfish ponds along Rt. 264, Pettigrew State Park, Pocosin Lakes NWR Visitor Center (a rest stop and luncheon break), the Futch Game Lands, Alligator River NWR at River Road, Buffalo City Road, Bodie Island Light House (P/O the NWR), Oregon Inlet Fishing Center, and Pea Island NWR. Whew!

We will check into our Hotel prior to a visit to the final stop of the day at Bodie Island. When the weather is clear the evening sunset provides excellent light for the ducks that use the ponds overnight. Sunset will signal time to return to the hotel for a social hour before heading out to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

On Thursday, we will have an early breakfast, check out of the hotel and drive down to the Pea Island Refuge for a look at many more shorebirds and ducks. Pea Island seems to be the place where the rare and unexpected are the norm. We'll begin the journey home around 11 AM, with a possible side trip to Mattamuskeet. Finally, home to New Bern where we usually arrive just before dark.

For overnight accommodations, you will need to make your reservations at the Comfort Inn SOUTH. The rate is a 15% discount. You must identify yourself as a member of "L-Bird". Phone 252-441-6315. The "full" breakfast room is not open but each guest can accept a "Grab N Go" bag breakfast.

Continued on Page 2



Correction: Last month's issue featured a Black-throated Green Warbler.

Here is:

*Blackburnian Warbler
Jackson Park, Henderson
County*

Oct. 11, 2021

©Michael Cheves

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Outer Banks Trip Nov. 10-11

by Les Coble, continued from front page

Be prepared for 2 full days of birding. Carry your lunch for Tuesday and have some snack items and/or water or other beverages on hand. Some folks leave the group near noon on Wednesday while others bird on the way home so plan a lunch on Wednesday accordingly.

Bring your usual birding supplies: binocs, scopes, insect repellent, field guide, sun screen and/or rain gear, etc.

Last year several folks asked me for addresses of sites we may visit. Sites with addresses for your GPS devices follow: (address for the Rest Stop is above)

1. Vernon James Research Station: 207 Research Station Rd, Plymouth, NC 27962

2. Pettigrew State Park: 2252 Lake Shore Rd, Creswell, NC 27928

3. Pocosin Lakes NWR Visitor Center (lunch stop): 205 South Ludington Dr., Columbia, NC 27925

4. Futch Game Lands (only if time permits): no address. Part of Alligator River Game Lands approximately nine miles from NWR Visitor Center onto an obscure dirt road to small dirt parking lot.

5. River Road (part of Alligator River NWR): No address. Approximately 2.1 miles past the Alligator River bridge. Second dirt road on the right? Has a short road sign easily missed.

6. Stop at Comfort Inn to check in: 8031 Old Oregon Inlet Rd., Nags Head, NC 27959

7. Bodie Island Lighthouse: 8210 Bodie Island Lighthouse, Nags Head, NC 27959

8. Oregon Inlet Fishing Center: 8770 Oregon Inlet Rd, Nags Head, NC 27959

9. Oregon Inlet Bridge area? Depends on construction. There is a parking area on the left after crossing the bridge, but not always accessible.

10. Pea Island NWR (first stop): No address. A small sand parking lot on the right about 2.1 miles from the Oregon Inlet Bridge.

11. Pea Island NWR: No addresses. Over the next 3 miles we will make a few stops to look onto the refuge dikes, ending at a visitors center (privy style restroom)

Birding Calendar

November 2: Monthly Meeting at Garber UMC (Mike Creedon's Alaska)

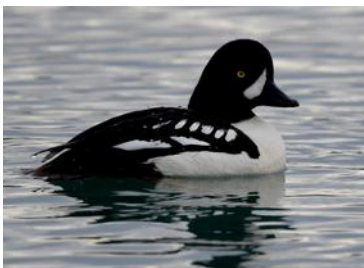
November 6: Bird Walk at Lawson Creek Park & Simmons Street Wetlands

November 10-11: Alligator River, Pea Island NWRs (overnight/mid-week)

Sunday December 12, 5:00 PM: Christmas Party at Bill and Olwen Jarvis' home (no meeting this month)

Christmas Bird Counts (See Page 7 for details):

Pamlico: Tues, Dec. 14th
New Bern: Thurs, Dec. 16th
Morehead City: Sun, Dec. 19th)



Barrow's Goldeneye
Alaska, June 2021
©Mike Creedon

LNBC November Meeting: Photo View of Alaska

by Les Coble, continued from front page

LNBC will hold our regular monthly meeting on **November 2nd**, Refreshments will start at 6:30 PM at the Garber Methodist Church, 4201 Country Club Road, Trent Woods. Come enjoy a photo view of Alaska and its birds courtesy of LNBC's own Mike Creedon.

Dues for the current Program Year may are \$15 per person and may be paid at a meeting or mailed to our club Treasurer at the address below. Checks should be payable to **Lower Neuse Bird Club**.

Christine Stoughton Root
458 Country Club Drive West
Arapahoe, NC 28510

Minutes: LNBC Meeting of October 5, 2021

by Jenni Ford

23 members and friends were in attendance at Garber UM Church. Wade's opening remarks: We have experienced a slow migration for land species this year, which has not been limited to our area. LNBC is considering an appropriate venue for the December holiday party, Covid rules permitting. Members should contact a board member if they are willing to host.

Upcoming events/walks – Emails will be sent to members in advance of the following trips:

Oct. 16th Ft. Macon – meet at the end of the parking lot at 8:00 AM (when the gates open).

Nov. 6th Simmons Street Wetlands

Weds and Thurs, Nov. 10th and 11th Pea Island. Separate email has been sent out regarding hotel reservations.

Also, Wednesday, Oct 27th there will be a trip to Simmons Street Wetlands, a bonus trip with Stormwater Superintendent Avery Smith, followed by some birding.

Program: Coexist with Alligators. Chris Kent – our resident District 2 Wildlife Biologist with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission gave a very enthusiastic presentation about his work with alligators. Lots of good information can be found at <https://NCWildlife.org/alligator> including practical tips on how to coexist with these animals and expanding on the following topics.

99% of all problems with alligators are caused by humans. If you live near water in Eastern NC, it comes with animals. Alligators are secretive and shy, not aggressive. They rarely pose a threat to humans. But do not feed them. Do not attract food sources such as ducks, geese, turtles and fish where alligators live. They will lose their fear of people; associating them with food instead.

Relocation – NC relocates alligators only when they are a danger to themselves or people. They will not stay in the new location, but will try to return to original location; they move rapidly and can move long distances. Relocation of animals that are 4 feet or less means certain death. Relocation is not done for unwanted animal in neighborhood retention ponds. They will typically move on their own.

Neighborhoods need strategies to mitigate issues (see more on the web site): Put up signs “Don't Feed the Alligators” and “No Swimming”, Culvert grating and fencing to keep animals in wild section of common areas.

Citizen science projects on alligators – participate via iNaturalist or by emailing specified data to Alicia.Davis@ncwildlife.org

Chris also recommended that we not feed birds, but if we must have birdfeeders limit them to November through April. Otherwise, they may attract unwanted wildlife, e.g. bears.

Since Alicia Davis, the Wildlife Commission's Alligator Biologist was unable to join us, due to illness, a program will be planned for early 2022 regarding an ongoing alligator research project at Lake Waccamaw.

Thanks to Olwen Jarvis for the refreshments provided during the meeting. Members who would like to volunteer to provide refreshments for future meetings (after the first of the year) can reach out to Sally Rowe.



Warm greetings to our newest club member, Sue Robbins from Morehead City. Welcome, Sue!

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Lower Neuse Bird Club Bird Walk: Fort Macon (Area) – Oct. 2, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird Club scheduled a mid-month Bird Walk to Fort Macon State Park in search of remnants of warbler migrations and early winter birds. You just never know what you will find this time of year. The day started out cool but warmed up as the morning progressed. Only five birders showed up at 8:00 AM to walk the ponds (dried-up), beach and grounds of the Fort Macon Visitor's Center.

However... the day started earlier for some. Ronnie was at the Hoop Pole Creek Nature Area in Atlantic Beach at 6:30 AM to check out the early birds! Walking in by flashlight, he found a vantage point at the edge of the marsh grass as the sun just crept over the treetops on a clear and practically windless morning.

Then the rails began to call. One, two, three, as many as seven were crying out, over the undisturbed marsh. Following this, the two Barred Owls began a duet in the still air and totally unexpected, an adult Bald Eagle flew in over the Intracoastal Waterway, circling the marsh and then returning from the direction that it came. One muted call from another rail indicated that a Virginia Rail had joined the serenade. As the sun brought light to the shadows, sparrows began to move about with some of them calling. Very quickly, a Swamp Sparrow appeared in a bush, a Song Sparrow was heard chipping and a Seaside Sparrow flew over the marsh. Wake up world!

Les started early as well, by visiting the Atlantic Beach Pier on the way to the park, looking for anything out over the water or on the beach, as the sun was rising. The crowds of people had not arrived as they will surely do as the morning advances, but only the normally expected birds were to be encountered (Sanderlings, Willets, Ruddy Turnstones, Pelicans, Gulls and Terns).

Back to the Fort – looking for and finding migrating warblers was one of our hopeful expectations. We found many Yellow-rumped Warblers as they have returned in number, as expected. The only other warbler to be located was a Blackpoll Warbler at the head of the trail as we left the parking lot, walking toward the beach by the Coast Guard station. Oh, and later on, a Northern Parula and an American Redstart would be seen, on our way back.

On the beach we found people – lots of people! There were a few Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings on the sand and a couple of Willet running along the edge. Les spotted a Lesser Black-backed Gull flying overhead. Mike got a quick picture and we pulled out the Sibley Field Guide to make sure that's what it was. We checked out the feeders at the Fort Macon Museum's lawn and briefly saw a female Painted Bunting. Moving over to the beach again we saw Black Skimmers across the channel on a sandspit along with pelicans, gulls and terns.

Hoop Pole Creek Nature Area had been so rewarding, the group drove back to Hoop Pole Creek Nature Area around 10:00 AM. This was a different setting now, with a bit of a breeze and a lot more road and boat noise being noticeable. A Northern Harrier was spotted gliding low over the marsh, along with sightings of a Cooper's Hawk, Osprey, Tri-colored Heron(s) and others. A Clapper Rail was heard, responding to our call and a Marsh Wren was heard and then located in a nearby bush, one of several bushes that are scattered throughout the marsh.

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Forster's Tern
2nd Oct. 2021
©Mike Creedon

Lower Neuse Bird Club Bird Walk: Fort Macon (Area) – Oct. 2, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page 4

As we were turning to leave, Les spotted a “Pink” bird across the marsh on a very long dock that leads to a residence, apparently on an island. It was a quarter of a mile across the marsh, but in our scopes, it was easy to determine that we had found a Roseate Spoonbill. What a break for us to have come out here. A Roseate Spoonbill was reported in mid-August of this year at the NC Aquarium, just 4-5 miles down the road. One report since then was west of there, at Indian Beach, reported in early September. This is quite the find! Yay Team!

Calico Creek was our next stop. There is a nice boardwalk that runs along Calico Creek in Morehead City. The tide was falling, exposing the oyster beds and mud flats. We parked at the north end of 22nd Street and walked through the trees to the western end of the boardwalk.

Skirting the marsh, the boardwalk makes a turn to our left at one point, and this is where Jeannie pointed out that a Clapper Rail hangs out under the boardwalk. Making the turn, so we would be able to see under the boardwalk, Les played the rail’s call and that little dude came charging out like it was ready for a fight! Explain that!

We had occasion to consider Snowy Egrets vs. Little Blue Herons as an immature (white) Little Blue flew up the creek, showing dark feet and a grayish bill. We also saw Snowy Egrets with dark feet but concluded that they had mud covered feet, concealing their “yellow slippers”. This time of year, Snowys will have black legs, black bill and yellow lores in addition to yellow feet. Little Blue Herons, although similar looking to Snowys in their immature white phase, will have a drab, pale, bluish-gray bill and lores. The bill will have a dark tip and the legs are a pale green. Both are about the same size.

We caught the movement of a Merlin, flying overhead. No time for a picture but it was an inspiring (not so often seen) flyover! In September, Merlins began returning to our area; they were last reported here, in April.

There were plenty of birds in view from the boardwalk – Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, White Ibis, and Great Blue Herons, along with gulls and terns. The return walk through the cemetery produced additional land birds for our list of 29 species at this location, including a Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and a Swainson’s Thrush. The Swainson’s Thrush was seen in the thick brambles off the last section of boardwalk as we returned to our vehicles.

On the way home Les spotted a Black Vulture, a Red-tailed Hawk and a Red-shouldered Hawk, bringing the day’s total count up to 68. It was a beautiful day to be out birding.

*Great Egret (L)
and Snowy Egret
(R)*

©Ronnie
Hewlette



Lower Neuse Bird Club

Checklist: Fort Macon (Area) – Oct. 2, 2021

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette



Swamp Sparrow
2nd Oct.. 2021
©Ronnie Hewlette

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
1	Rock Pigeon	24	Great Egret	47	Carolina Wren
2	Eurasian Collared-Dove	25	Snowy Egret	48	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
3	Mourning Dove	26	Little Blue Heron	49	European Starling
4	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	27	Tricolored Heron	50	Gray Catbird
5	Clapper Rail	28	White Ibis	51	Brown Thrasher
6	Virginia Rail	29	Roseate Spoonbill	52	Northern Mockingbird
7	Killdeer	30	Black Vulture	53	House Sparrow
8	Ruddy Turnstone	31	Turkey Vulture	54	House Finch
9	Sanderling	32	Osprey	55	Swainson's Thrush
10	Greater Yellowlegs	33	Northern Harrier	56	Seaside Sparrow
11	Willet	34	Bald Eagle	57	Song Sparrow
12	Laughing Gull	35	Red-shouldered Hawk	58	Swamp Sparrow
13	Herring Gull	36	Red-tailed Hawk	59	Red-winged Blackbird
14	Lesser Black-backed Gull	37	Barred Owl	60	Brown-headed Cowbird
15	Great Black-backed Gull	38	Belted Kingfisher	61	Common Grackle
16	Caspian Tern	39	Red-bellied Woodpecker	62	Boat-tailed Grackle
17	Common Tern	40	Northern Flicker	63	American Redstart
18	Forster's Tern	41	Merlin	64	Northern Parula
19	Royal Tern	42	Eastern Phoebe	65	Blackpoll Warbler
20	Black Skimmer	43	Blue Jay	66	Yellow-rumped Warbler
21	Double-crested Cormorant	44	Carolina Chickadee	67	Northern Cardinal
22	Brown Pelican	45	House Wren	68	Painted Bunting
23	Great Blue Heron	46	Marsh Wren		

BIRDING FUN: Eastern vs. Western Palm Warbler

by Les Coble

A special thanks to Ronnie Hewlette for this photo (left). So, why is this a *Setophaga palmarum palmarum* vs *Setophaga palmarum hypochrysea* (meaning lotsa yellow/gold!)? The Eastern Palm Warbler is on the right and you can easily see the difference. There is a more distinct yellow eye brow and yellow from the throat to the vent. The photo is courtesy *ml's pictures* through Flickr Creative Commons. NOTE it also shows a yellow rump, as does both subspecies! This is a field mark we tend not to see when the bobbing tail gives away the identification.



Why note this to our readers? We are seeing many Palm Warblers now and we will see them in very small numbers all winter. We see this warbler and its constantly bobbing tail and have learned that action separates it from all other warblers. But start to notice that we see the eastern subspecies more often late into migration and into winter, and then very early in spring migration. Most of those we have been seeing are the Western subspecies. So, look forward to a hypochrysea yet this migration season, and very early next spring.

The map at right shows, albeit with considerable difficulty, these two subspecies have breeding territories that generally do not overlap except in an area of western Quebec Province, Canada.



Join Audubon's 122nd Annual Christmas Bird Count

The following dates have been confirmed for the Christmas Bird Counts in our region. All birders are welcome to participate, regardless of experience level. To join a count, contact the coordinator listed below:

Pamlico County: Tuesday, December 14th
 Coordinator: Dianne Midness (dmidness@gmail.com)

New Bern: Thursday, December 16th
 Coordinator: Wade Fuller (wade@fullersmusic.com)

Morehead City: Sunday, December 19th
 Coordinator: John Fussell (jofuss@ec.rr.com)



Lower Neuse Bird Club

Lapland Longspur Sighting Cedar Island – October 18, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette

The winds had been blowing out of the Northwest all day Sunday and the wind velocity was picking up. Kevin O’Kane and I had planned on driving out to Cedar Island to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and to see what these favorable winds might bring.

Les Coble texted us on the drive out that he was at the Quarry, and he was seeing a fall-out of birds as they came in to rest and recuperate before continuing their migration. He had a list of 29 species in less than an hour!

Kevin and I stopped along the Cedar Island Causeway to look and listen for birds, so we arrived at the Ferry Terminal beach a little after 9:00 AM. We found Sanderlings and Black-bellied Plovers in the parking lot! Apparently the 14 MPH winds had everything hunkered down. Walking back to the edge of the pond that is near the parking lot, we first spotted four Black Ducks and a Wilson’s Snipe on the far side. Then we realized we had birds running around, literally, right at our feet. The wind had caused them to move off the beach, onto the low sand dunes – Least Sandpipers, Dunlin, Semipalmated Sandpipers, Western Sandpipers, Black-bellied Plovers, Semipalmated Plovers, Piping Plover, everybody was there. Later, we found a Horned Lark on a sand flat but that would not be the “bird of the day”.

We then spotted a bird that was unusual, right out in the open, ahead of us. It appeared to be sparrow-like and had a patterned head, so we immediately thought it was a Lark Sparrow. We moved around trying to get the sun at our backs for better pictures and the birds hardly noticed our movements. This bird worked its way to the east in the grass about 5 yards from the pond (sound side) beginning 20 yards east of the boat ramp parking area and allowed us to move around and take pictures.

Later in the morning, back at the parking lot, we got out the Sibley’s Field Guide and saw that it did not have a bold enough facial pattern to be a Lark Sparrow. At that point we decided to go with Vesper Sparrow, but the eye ring did not seem to be bold enough, and I had a feeling that the reddish-brown wing panel did not fit the Vesper Sparrow. Back at home, I pulled up my pictures on the laptop and looked at a couple more field guides. One guide fell open to Longspurs and there it was – a Lapland Longspur.

I posted my pictures to the Facebook “Bird Identification Group of the World” site for confirmation and got an immediate response. No doubt at that point; I changed the species on my checklist. According to eBird, this is the second sighting of a Lapland Longspur for Carteret County. The previous sighting was December, 1989 at Rachel Carson Reserve – Bird Shoals.

Previously, several sightings were reported on Pea Island NWR in 2012 and Christine Root with a group of birders had one in October 2016 at Cape Hatteras NS/Oregon Inlet. This is not a regular bird in our area!

The Lapland Longspur breeds in arctic tundra and winters in open habitats including used agricultural fields, turf farms, and coastal dunes. Found throughout the Arctic zones of Europe, Asia, and North America in summer, in winter the birds come south in flocks, to forage in windswept fields. Although they range widely across the continent, the vast majority winter on the Great Plains and they seldom get over to our local area.

This is a life bird for both me and Kevin. Wow – what a find!

Birding ID: Two Photo Images from Fort Macon and Area – LNBC Bonus Trip, Oct. 16, 2021

by Les Coble

The morning started with many Yellow-rumped Warblers at the end of the parking lot. The only other warbler near abouts, seen just before the trip started, managed to remain in the same dense bush where it had been seen. Thanks to Mike Creedon, who had to work VERY quickly to get this image of a ravenously foraging first winter Blackpoll.

How might you tell? No white or yellow eye ring so an immature Pine Warbler and immature Bay-breasted Warbler are eliminated. NOTE the white undertail coverts. The Cape May and Blackburnian Warblers have white undertails, but they have a defined dark auricular area. You cannot see a feature mentioned by Ron Hewlette as the bird frantically searched the undersides of the leaves – yellow feet! Open your favorite guide and review this oft confusing warbler.



Another fun set of photos Mike obtained were of the Willet seen below. For those who eBird they see two lines for Willet, one has (Western) in parenthesis after the name. This is such a bird, easily discernable here from its Eastern counterpart by the light grey washed-out color everywhere except the belly and vent, that are white. In this non-breeding adult the throat also typically has more extensive white.



Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Photo Gallery



LNBC Members
2nd Oct. 2021
©Mike Creedon



Roseate Spoonbill
Hoop Pole Creek Natural Area
2nd Oct. 2021
©Ronnie Hewlette



Clapper Rail
2nd Oct. 2021
©Ronnie Hewlette



Lapland Longspur at Cedar Island NWR
(Also bottom right photographs)
18th Oct. 2021
©Ronnie Hewlette

