

# Lower Neuse Bird Club

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## LNBC Monthly Meetings to Resume in September

by Les Coble

Welcome back LNBC members, and welcome to new members! Despite Covid and the loss of our monthly evening meetings, we have grown! This is the result of our culture of helping each other see birds on our walks, and sharing those ID clues. We ask questions, seek answers and share. This education is the “icing on the cake” of membership. Identifying birds is a lifelong quest to this daily enjoyable adventure of watching old favorites perform. We will resume our regular monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of the month, starting September 7<sup>th</sup> and continuing through May, except for our annual “Holiday Gathering” in December. The first Saturday of each month from September through June will generally be our “First Saturday Bird Walks”.

**LNBC September Meeting Date:** Tuesday, September 7<sup>th</sup>

**Meeting Time:** 6:30 PM (social time, with refreshments and snacks), meeting begins at 7:00 PM

**Meeting Location:** Room 123 of Ministry Center at Garber United Methodist Church (4202 Country Club Road, New Bern, NC – [View on Google Maps](#))

**Featured Speaker for September:** Kristopher Smith



*Kristopher Smith*

Kristopher Smith is the Citizen Science Program Manager within the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. Kris has been with the Commission for 17 years and was previously a center director and the chief of Wildlife Education. Kris grew up just outside of Syracuse, New York, and would spend his summers and Raquette Lake in the Adirondack Mountains. It was deep in the woods on long hikes, climbing mountains, kayaking and camping that sparked his passion for the environment. One of Kris’s fondest memories was the kayak/camping trips he took with his Dad back into the remote areas along Blow River Flow and sitting around the campfire listening to the Loons call across the lake.

Kris graduated from SUNY Cortland with a Bachelor’s in Biology and a Master of Environmental Management from the Nicholas School of Environment at Duke University. Kris has been a resident of North Carolina since graduating and made the Piedmont region his home for his family. Kris considers himself a beginning “bird nerd” and is both committed and passionate to the NC Bird Atlas. As more people began birding over the past year, Kris hopes to connect other beginner and novice birders to those more experienced and lifelong mentors. Kris is the NC Bird Atlas (<https://ebird.org/atlasnc/about>) and can be reached at [coordinator@ncbirdatlas.org](mailto:coordinator@ncbirdatlas.org).



Where was this photo taken? For a hint, see Pages 7-8!

©Michael Cheves

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### September Bird Walks

by Les Coble

Due to Labor Day weekend, the “First Saturday” Bird Walk for September will be on September 11<sup>th</sup>. The LNBC will be returning to the excellent birding hotspot at North River Wetlands Preserve, with John Fussell leading the group. The 6,000-acre site is managed by the NC Coastal Federation, with the goal of returning the former farmland to its original forested, freshwater and tidal wetlands in order to improve the water quality of degraded downstream estuaries and reopen these waters for shellfishing (source: <https://www.nccoast.org/project/north-river-wetlands-preserve/>).

We will meet at the gate on US-70 at **8:00 AM**. Please carpool, as we will caravan in, entering and leaving as a group, and the gate at the entrance will be closed behind us. It is an hour from James City, which leaves a few minutes for a restroom stop at the gas station at the corner of Harker’s Island Road about 1/2 -mile away. Please plan your driving time carefully.

If you would like to carpool with someone, please contact Les Coble (410-829-5501) or Wade Fuller (252-229-8012), and we will gladly help find a seat for you.

Wear clothing to protect against flies, mosquitoes, and ticks AND bring snacks/water. There is a restroom on the Preserve we will be near at one point during the walk. A hat and sunscreen is also strongly advised. Add that favorite pair of binoculars and bring a scope if you have one. We will wrap up at the Preserve at around 12 noon, with the option to continue on to Cedar Island NWR afterwards.

Tentative plans have been made to go to East Shackelford Banks on **September 18<sup>th</sup>**. There is an \$18 ferry fee to get to East Shackelford. Members will be updated on this trip via the e-mail list.



Lesser Yellowlegs  
North River Wetlands  
8<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2018  
©Michael Cheves

### Support Wildlife Conservation with Duck Stamps

Courtesy of Steven Shultz (Carolina Birds listserv)



While ostensibly used as a requirement to hunt waterfowl, the duck stamp program is one of the most direct ways to help obtain land for conservation, which positively impacts waterfowl and non-game birds and animals. 98% of the purchase price (\$25) goes directly to purchase of land. I challenge folks to find a vehicle that passes through that much per dollar (and it makes a great stocking

stuffer!)... and if you do find places with that much throughput, please support them as well. Find out more about the program here:

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/index.php>

You can purchase the stamps from the post office here:

[https://store.usps.com/store/product/stamp-collectors/migratory-bird-stamp-2021-2022-S\\_336604](https://store.usps.com/store/product/stamp-collectors/migratory-bird-stamp-2021-2022-S_336604)

(Photographed is the 2019-2020 stamp w/COA featuring the Wood Duck. This year’s stamp features the Lesser Scaup-Ed.)



LNBC is happy to have Joseph Rogers of New Bern, NC as the newest club member! Welcome, Joseph!

## Lower Neuse Bird Club Bird Walk: North River Preserve – June 5, 2021

by Ronnie Hewlette

**North River Wetlands Preserve** in Carteret County was to be the location for our last birding adventure for the 2020-21 season. Seventeen birders gathered at the entrance of the Preserve, just off Highway 70, between Otway and Smyrna, NC just before 8:00 AM, and the caravan, led by John Fussell, embarked on what was to become a hot and humid morning of birding, with some “Life Birds” to be discovered.

According to the North Carolina Coastal Federation’s web site, this 6,000-acre restoration project at North River Farms in eastern Carteret County is one of the largest wetland restoration projects in North Carolina and is among the largest project of its kind in the nation. It is a perfect location for birding, any time of the year! The Club is fortunate to be allowed motorized access for this recurring event, once, in the Spring, and again in the Fall.

This year’s June-trip followed several days of much needed rain, but it created a scenario that was not good for shorebirds that are commonly found here. We did find Dickcissels, our “Bird for the Day”, in several locations, more Yellow-breasted Chats than most can remember hearing/seeing in recent seasons, wading birds, multitudes of White Ibis and Laughing Gulls and a good number of Bobwhites. It was good to hear so many Bobwhites! As explained on the NC Wildlife Resources Commission’s web site, “Habitat changes over the past 40-50 years have been detrimental to small game, including three resident small game birds (quail, grouse and pheasants). Conservation challenges include urban growth, habitat fragmentation, exotic plants and insects, incompatible farming and forestry practices, and unchecked forest succession. Habitats are deteriorating for bobwhite quail and grouse which are dependent upon early successional conditions. Remnant populations of pheasants, a non-native gamebird, also continue to decline on the Outer Banks, where larger populations once existed.”

At the gate, several birds, including Pileated Woodpecker, Great Crested Flycatcher, and Red-bellied Woodpecker were spotted in the trees as we prepared to depart. Stopping along the road not far from the gate, first we saw and heard Prairie Warblers and Blue Grosbeaks, followed by our first sighting of Snowy Egrets and a flyover of White Ibis and Cattle Egrets. Farther along, we heard and saw Eastern Meadowlarks, followed by the first of several Dickcissels. I have always thought that the Dickcissel, on first glance, looks like a “miniature” Meadowlark, with its yellow breast and black breastband. A quick check of the Cornell-Lab’s eBird records shows that North River Preserve has had a pocket breeding population of Dickcissels since early 2013. Their primary breeding range is in overgrown pastures, savannahs, and croplands in the central Great Plains (USA). In their wintering range of Central and South America (Primarily in the Llanos tropical grassland plain area, situated to the east of the Andes in Colombia and Venezuela, in northwestern South America), they live in similar open places, and large flocks of wintering Dickcissels can be found on grasslands and croplands.



*Yellow-breasted Chat  
North River Preserve  
5<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
©Michael Cheves*

*Continued on Page 4*



## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### Lower Neuse Bird Club Bird Walk: North River Preserve – June 5, 2021

*by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page 3*



*Dickcissel  
North River Preserve  
5<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
©Ronnie Hewlette*

While driving in on the Farm’s rocked roads, we were traversing around standing water, an indication of the amount of recent rainfall. Farther along, the roads turned into hard-packed dirt/grass paths and at one point along the way, a Cottonmouth Moccasin snake was observed in the road, with its mouth thrown open, exposing the white of its signature “cotton-mouth” as the caravan drove over it. (No one actually hit it.)

White Ibis was the most abundant species for the morning, with estimates of 200-400+ individuals, soaring above the crops and flying overhead in flocks of 5-15.

Everyone got good looks at Dickcissel, Yellow-breasted Chats and Blue Grosbeaks as we stopped at several locations and found them to be most cooperative. A Wild Turkey was seen flying (low to the ground) as it entered the woods near the intersection with Ward Creek, near the corner with Open Grounds Farm. Not so easily observed were some Orchard Orioles, seen along the ditch-line and numerous White-eyed Vireos were heard.

As our caravan was driving southeast along the edge of the open grassy strip, a 6-point White-tailed Buck jumped up behind the second vehicle in our caravan and dashed across the open area into the brush. Wow – guess he couldn’t tolerate us being so close!

At the overlook where the shorebirds are usually found, there were only a few waders – Little Blue Heron, Tri-colored Heron, Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, Green Heron, and 15+ Cattle Egrets, seen in the distance, looking like Magnolia blooms in the trees.

A handful of us heard a Virginia Rail in the marsh as we were leaving, so we added another species to the list – 57 total for the morning and the Dickcissel was a Life-bird for at least one person.

It is interesting to compare what individual birders see and report at the end of the day. As hard as one might try to share observations with the group, some species get overlooked. As an example, there were single observations reported for ten species during the day (Cooper’s Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Blue Jay, Purple Martin, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, European Starling, American Robin, Chipping Sparrow, Yellow-throated Warbler). This is the challenge – to have an awareness of what is around you. I am sure I may have heard or seen some of these, but I may have just failed to make note of it, or I may have totally missed it. This is what makes me keep coming back!!

It was another rewarding trip to the North River Preserve and thanks goes out to John Fussell for hosting the Lower Neuse Bird Club’s Bird Walk for June.

# LNBC Checklist: North River Preserve – June 5, 2021

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

#	Species	#	Species	#	Species
01.	Northern Bobwhite	20.	Cooper’s Hawk	39.	American Robin
02.	Wild Turkey	21.	Red-shouldered Hawk	40.	Chipping Sparrow
03.	Mourning Dove	22.	Red-tailed Hawk	41.	Eastern Towhee
04.	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	23.	Red-bellied Woodpecker	42.	Yellow-breasted Chat
05.	Common Nighthawk	24.	Pileated Woodpecker	43.	Eastern Meadowlark
06.	Virginia Rail	25.	Great Crested Flycatcher	44.	Orchard Oriole
07.	Laughing Gull	26.	Eastern Kingbird	45.	Red-winged Blackbird
08.	Double-crested Cormorant	27.	White-eyed Vireo	46.	Brown-headed Cowbird
09.	Great Blue Heron	28.	Blue Jay	47.	Common Grackle
10.	Great Egret	29.	American Crow	48.	Prothonotary Warbler
11.	Snowy Egret	30.	Fish Crow	49.	Common Yellowthroat
12.	Little Blue Heron	31.	Carolina Chickadee	50.	Pine Warbler
13.	Tricolored Heron	32.	Purple Martin	51.	Yellow-throated Warbler
14.	Cattle Egret	33.	Barn Swallow	52.	Prairie Warbler
15.	Green Heron	34.	Tree Swallow	53.	Summer Tanager
16.	White Ibis	35.	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	54.	Northern Cardinal
17.	Black Vulture	36.	Carolina Wren	55.	Blue Grosbeak
18.	Turkey Vulture	37.	European Starling	56.	Indigo Bunting
19.	Sharp-shinned Hawk	38.	Eastern Bluebird	57.	Dickcissel





# Lower Neuse Bird Club

## LNBC Photo Gallery

Submit your photos to [lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com](mailto:lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com)  
All nature and bird-related contributions are welcome! Contributors will be credited for their work.



*Clockwise from top left: Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Tricolored Heron  
North River Wetlands Preserve, 5<sup>th</sup> June  
2021  
All photos ©Ronnie Hewlette*

### *Ruddy Turnstone*

*Pamlico Point  
Impoundments  
26<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2021*

*©Christine  
Stoughton Root*





# Photo Essay: Blue Ridge Mountains, Spring 2021

Photos by Michael Cheves



*Worm-eating Warbler*  
Mountain View Lane, Wilkes County  
1<sup>st</sup> May



*Golden-winged Warbler*  
Elk Knob Game Land  
Watauga County  
1<sup>st</sup> May



*Black-and-White Warbler*  
E.B. Jeffress Park, Wilkes County  
27<sup>th</sup> April



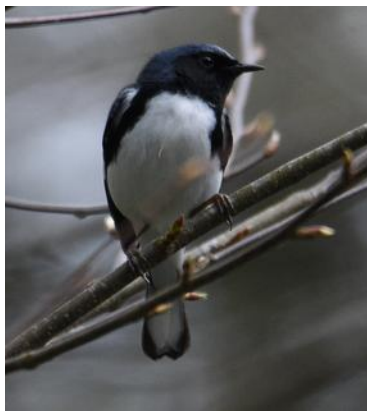
*Vesper Sparrow*  
Elk Knob Game Land  
Watauga County  
1<sup>st</sup> May



*White-crowned Sparrow*  
Brookshire Park, Boone  
28<sup>th</sup> April



*Dark-eyed Junco*  
Moses H. Cone Park – Trout Lake  
Watauga County  
29<sup>th</sup> April



*Black-throated Blue Warbler*  
Moses H. Cone Park – Trout  
Lake  
29<sup>th</sup> April



*Tree Swallow*  
Valle Crucis Community Park  
28<sup>th</sup> April



*Elk Knob Game Land, Watauga County*  
1<sup>st</sup> May



# Lower Neuse Bird Club

## Photo Essay: Blue Ridge Mountains, Spring 2021

Photos by Michael Cheves



*American Goldfinch  
Chickering Lane, Waynesville  
3<sup>rd</sup> May*



*Willow Flycatcher  
Boone Greenway  
29<sup>th</sup> April*



*Solitary Sandpiper  
Brookshire Park, Boone  
28<sup>th</sup> April*



*Blue Ridge Parkway – Cowee Mountain  
5<sup>th</sup> May*



*Red-eyed Vireo  
(abundant in Philips  
Gap/Fall Creek area  
of Wilkes County)  
1<sup>st</sup> May*



*Dr. Bob Holmes – LNBC Founding Member  
Memorial at Valle Crucis Community Park  
28<sup>th</sup> April*



*Lake James SP  
2<sup>nd</sup> May*



*Dr. Bob Holmes – LNBC Founding Member  
Memorial Tree at Valle Crucis Community Park  
28<sup>th</sup> April*



*Blue Ridge Parkway – Beacon Heights  
29<sup>th</sup> April*



## How to Use Binoculars

by Pete Dunne

Reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* September/October 2021, with permission.

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

Fundamental to bird watching is using binoculars to find birds. Somewhat inexplicably, little attention seems directed toward this all-important subject by field-trip leaders.

As part of my Hog Island Audubon Camp instructional spiel, I typically spend the first 15 minutes discussing binocular use, and I once had a participant tell me that after seven years of bird watching, this was the first time anyone had tutored him on binocular use. Seven years is a long time to be frustrated.

First and foremost, have binoculars that are designed for birding and whose individual eyepiece adapter (diopter) has been calibrated to accommodate the differences between your eyes. This procedure is explained in the instruction manual of your binocular or should have been performed by the store clerk where you purchased your instrument. (For more information, see [tinyurl.com/how-to-use-bins](http://tinyurl.com/how-to-use-bins).)

Heed this basic rule: Eyes find; binoculars study. Both of your eyes are packed with rod cells whose primary function is to detect motion. Let them. Yes, you are in love with your new binoculars, but don't be so quick to trade a magnified slice of the world for a panoramic view.

If you are in woodlands, figure most birds will be 30 feet away or closer. Pre-focus your glass to 30 feet. Now you are in the ballpark, and won't have to spin your (focus) wheels left and right trying to get a sharp image. On most binoculars, focusing closer is now a matter of moving the focus wheel incrementally right.

Search for birds with your eyes, binoculars lowered. Remember you are hot-wired to detect motion. If a bird flies in and lands, keep your eyes on that spot. The bird may not be visible immediately, so identify some signature characteristic close to where the bird landed: a patch of moss, an X where branches cross, twisted leaves, or an old bird's nest – anything that stands out. Now, without taking your eyes off that spot, adjust your feet until you have a balanced stance, and raise your binoculars so that they fall in line with you and the spot where you are looking. Move the focus wheel to get a sharp image. Locate your signature marker to confirm that you are in the right spot. Now, wait for the bird to betray itself with motion: a hop, a turned head, a tail wag, or a wing flick.

Most birds remain still for several seconds after landing to detect and deter hunting hawks. Five seconds is typically all the time you'll need before the bird betrays itself. Trust your eyes. Do not move your binoculars left or right, up or down trying to locate the bird. All you'll succeed in doing is masking the bird's tell-tale movement.

*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.*



## LNBC Membership Dues

With the start of the new Program Year, it is time to pay your annual membership dues. Dues are \$15 per person and cover the Program Year from September 2021-May 2022. Dues provide for room rental, monthly programs, field trips, our holiday party, and additional projects and donations undertaken by the club. Checks should be payable to **Lower Neuse Bird Club**. Dues can be paid at a monthly meeting, or mailed to:

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

