



Lower Neuse Bird Club

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April Bird Walk – Patsy’s Pond & Cedar Point Tideland Trail

by Les Coble

We will repeat last year’s Swansboro Area, full of noisy rails and both resident and migrant landbirds. Meet at the Patsy Pond Nature Trail at **7:30 AM**. Bachman’s Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpecker will be our target species. Patsy Pond address: **3614 NC-24, Newport, NC** (<https://goo.gl/maps/4PaxUwCj7KEuLwux7>)

Secondly, we will drive to the Cedar Point Nature Trail where several habitats converge and change often. Water birds and landbirds will keep us open-minded about what could be around the next bend in the trail. Cedar Point Address: **Forest Rd. 153A, Swansboro, NC 28584** (<https://goo.gl/maps/MPSSb9RfVZraCDUd8>)

LNBC Monthly Meeting – Tuesday, April 5th

by Les Coble & Wade Fuller

The LNBC monthly meeting is at Tuesday, April 5th at 7:00 PM, but arrive early for the pre-meeting gathering with light snacks (provided by Elizabeth White). Our presentation will be by the team of Al Gamache and Wade Fuller, entitled “Spring Bird Walk Prep.” We will highlight about 15 special species that we hope to find on our spring outings with a review of identification tips and ways that will help us recognize their songs.

Garber Church Address: **4201 Country Club Rd., New Bern, NC** (<https://goo.gl/maps/h5WBn1paR5tvvRbT6>)

If you have not paid your dues for the 2021-22 Program Year, dues can be paid to club Treasurer Christine Stoughton Root at the meeting. Dues are \$15 per person per year. Alternatively, dues can be mailed to Christine at:

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

Meeting Minutes – LNBC March 1, 2022

by Jenni Ford

12 members were in attendance at Garber UM Church. Ronnie Hewlette’s opening remarks: This is the first monthly meeting of the year, since we have stopped having meetings in January due to the state of the Covid pandemic.

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Meeting Minutes – LNBC March 1, 2022

by Jenni Ford, continued from Front Page

Birding Calendar Winter-Spring 2022

April 2nd: Croatan NF

April 5th: Monthly Meeting
(Garber UMC)

May 3rd: Monthly Meeting
(Garber UMC)

May 7: Beaufort County

May (TBD): Camp Brinson
Game Lands (migratory
warblers)

June 4th: North River
Wetlands Preserve

Upcoming events/walks:

March 5th Fort Macon and nearby locations – A group will meet at 7:30 AM at the far end of the visitor's center parking lot.

Mike Creedon asked whether there would be a trip to Shackleford Island in the Spring. He was assured that the proposed list is never final, and all trips are dependent on weather and other conditions. A replacement trip or extra trip to Shackleford could be a possibility.

Program: Special Birds of the Pandemic: Rare and Unusual Birds seen in our area from January 2020 to Present. Wade Fuller facilitated the presentation with photos (many taken by LNBC members) and range maps. Phenomenal bird sightings over the past two years can be ascribed to:

Pandemic-related – People stayed home more and saw activity in yards and at feeders that they otherwise would have missed.

Pandemic-related – When folks could not go to public places, they were engaged in more outside activities.

Climate changes – Change in weather patterns cause odd things to happen.

Descriptions of personal sightings were provided by email from Carol Reigle, and in person by Wade, Al Gamache, Mike Cheves, Mike Creedon, and Tom Leith. Past birds seen (in approximate chronological order):

Wood Stork, Bronzed Cowbird, White-winged Tern, Kirtland's Warbler, Rough-legged Hawk, Tennessee Warbler, Vermilion Flycatcher, MacGillivray's Warbler, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Varied Thrush, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Evening Grosbeak, Lapland Longspur, Thick-billed Longspur (formerly known as McCown's Longspur), Snow Bunting, White-winged Scoter.

Birds that were still "in play" at the date of the meeting:

Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Snowy Owl, Mountain Bluebird, Heerman's Gull.

Thank you to Ronnie Hewlette, who provided refreshments for the meeting.

Alert: Avian Influenza

Contributed by Wade Fuller

The NC Wildlife Commission is currently tracking an outbreak of avian influenza (bird flu) amongst NC water birds. This includes loons, egrets, herons, ducks, etc. but other species such as hawks and falcons may be at risk as well. For instance, a Northern Shoveler in Hyde County recently tested positive for the flu. If you are out birding and notice any water bird acting sick, lethargic, or unusual, please call or text LNBC Co-President Wade Fuller at (252)-229-8012 so he can inform the proper authorities. Thank you!

LNBC Bird Walk – Fort Macon SP, March 5, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird had a good turnout for our March Bird Walk that focused on Fort Macon State Park and near-by Hoop Pole Creek Natural Area in Atlantic Beach and Calico Creek Boardwalk in Morehead City, NC.

The weather these days is a mystery, tempting of an early spring. When we gathered at the Fort Macon Parking Lot, it was a cool 46° with a light NE breeze at 6 mph. Dressing in layers was a virtue as we would see these conditions change throughout the morning, eventually warming up to 70° by noon. The group of fifteen birders included experts, as well as beginners and non-birders, out for an adventure. It would surely turn out to be a rewarding experience for all of us.

At the Fort Macon Visitor's Center, we began with a look at the bird feeders. There we found White-throated Sparrows, Song Sparrows, Common and Boat-tailed Grackles, Cardinals, and Doves. A Gray Catbird was seen in the bushes near the sidewalk as we heard a Carolina Wren and several Mockingbirds and Eastern Towhees. As a side note, Jeannie pointed out the Marsh Rabbits that were under the feeders. They have noticeably shorter ears that the regular Cottontail Rabbits and according to Jeannie, there has been somewhat of a local population explosion of these Marsh Rabbits. The things you learn on these outings?!

Over at the dried-up pond we eased up to the observation area to find a frenzy of Yellow-rumped Warbler activity. Then we picked out a White Ibis, one of four that had flown over the parking lot earlier. A couple of Black-crowned Night-Herons flew up into the branches of trees on the far side of the pond – one mature adult and one Immature. Then as we maneuvered so that everyone got a good look at these impressive birds, more appeared in the same area. There we stood with the sun to our backs, while at least eight of these birds moved about in the trees. This has always been a good location to see these Night-Herons but today conditions were exceptional!

Moving along toward the beach, we saw a Common Loon out in the channel, close to shore; a promise of things to come. At the beach, adjacent to the Coast Guard Station, there were several Bonaparte's Gulls floating on the water. What an opportunity to check out the field marks for identification and watch as they took to flight and then return. From behind the Coast Guard fence a group of Red-breasted Merganser appeared. One male and three females hung together most of the time, occasionally diving for food, moving up and down the beach in front of us.

Returning to the parking area, we walked out to the Observation Deck, overlooking Beaufort Inlet Channel. Boats were congregated in the area off the beach, obviously fishing for whatever fish was concentrated in this area. Must have been productive, as there were a lot of boats out there. Not much action from a birding perspective, as we saw only a few Pelicans, gulls, terns and a couple of shorebirds in the distance – too far to make a definitive identification. Best "guess" was that they would be Willets but with the sun in our face and the distance between us and these birds, it was a guess, at best.



*Marsh Rabbit
Fort Macon SP, March 5,
2022
©Ronnie Hewlette*

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Bird Walk – Fort Macon SP, March 5, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #3

As we headed-out from the parking lot to the rock jetty, Ronnie and Kevin took a side route to check-out the “Willetts” – sure enough, those two shorebirds were still there and they confirmed that they were in fact, Willetts. It was a good exercise and as luck would have it, this route put them at a rendezvous with a Wilson’s Plover. This is considered a rare sighting by the Carolina Bird Club for this location and date. There have been a handful of sightings in February in the last 5 years and a few more in March. Most of these sightings in our local area have been at Shackelford Banks and Rachel Carson Reserve, both of which are not far from the beach at Fort Macon. Woo-hoo! You never know what you might see on the beach in early March!

At the Rock Jetty we encountered several new species for the day’s list. A Black Scoter flew away, along with a Red-breasted Merganser. Ruddy Turnstones, Common and Red-throated Loons, Sanderlings, a Willet and a few Horned Grebes rounded out the checklist at this location. Returning to the parking lot by way of the beach we searched for the Wilson’s Plover, but it had left the area. Too bad; this would have been a Life-bird or at least a State-bird for several of the birders in our group.

Back at the vehicles we started shedding layers as it began warming up nicely. From here we drove down to the Fort Macon Beach/Bathhouse. The open area (ringed by bushes) north of the bathhouse can be a good place to find a Vesper Sparrow, as it tends to over-winter here (Dec-March). Rarely seen and identified without some effort, this species has a distinctive white eye-ring and white outer tail feathers (seen in flight). Otherwise, it might be identified as a Savannah Sparrow. We found some Savannah and Song Sparrows but no Vesper Sparrows. We tried!

Moving out to the beach, we set up scopes on the covered deck, scanning for anything that we might find on the beach or in the ocean at this location. There were a ton of gulls on the beach! Mixed in with the Ring-billed Gulls were three or four Laughing Gulls. Bunched together, closer to the water’s edge were twenty or more Sanderlings. A few Common Loons and Red-throated Loons were spotted, fairly far off the beach. Several groups of Horned Grebes were seen – final count was around thirty, as they were diving and bobbing in the waves in scattered groups of 4 to 10.

Gannet could be seen (with some effort) in the distance, plunging into the water, sending plumes of water skyward. These birds can dive from a height of 100+ feet, and its momentum can take it to a depth of almost 40 feet as they feed on fish at depths that are unachievable by other birds. Impressive!

Our next stop is at Hoop Pole Creek Natural Area, just adjacent to the Atlantic Station Shopping Center in Atlantic Beach. The access starts out as a board walk that turns into a paved walkway that eventually goes to dirt. Thick vegetation of the maritime forest surrounds the path, including huge Live Oak trees, and then the path breaks out into a saltwater marsh overlooking Hoop Pole Creek that feeds into Bogue Sound. Owned by NC Coastal Federation, this site is part of the NC Birding Trail that identifies locations where bird watching is appreciated, encouraged, and accessible. Very nice little walk -- the biting No-see-ums weren’t too bad and I’m forever glad the mosquitos were out-of-town!



Black-crowned Night-Heron
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette



Black-crowned Night-Heron (immature)
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette

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LNBC Bird Walk – Fort Macon SP, March 5, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #4

There is a short side path on the east side of the trail before you get to the views of the creek. A few of us stepped over there, to the edge of a finger of marsh and played the call of a Clapper Rail. At first, all was quiet, then on the second round of calls, two or maybe three Clappers sounded off, just a few feet from where we were standing. What a racket!! Amazing! This has consistently been a good location for Clapper Rails, pretty much year-round.

Out at the end of the primary trail, at the edge of the creek and marsh, we located several Tri-colored Herons on the other side of the creek, mixed in with Great Egrets. They were almost hidden by the marsh grass, with their heads sticking up just enough to locate them so that when they moved to a new spot they were easily identified. An Oystercatcher was seen on an oyster bar near the channel and Hooded Mergansers and a Pied-billed Grebe were spotted in the creek.

By the time we returned to the parking lot, it was almost noon. Several in our group decided to call it a day but there were six of us that headed over to the Calico Creek Boardwalk in Morehead City.

Starting from the 22nd Street parking area, we were astonished at the number of Yellow-rumped Warblers in constant motion in the trees over the trail. Just then a Cooper's Hawk glided over at tree-top height, giving us a quick view of his underside and broad, rounded wings and very long, barred tail. Moving on to the first section of the boardwalk that extends out over the marsh grass, we expected to find Clapper Rails but none responded to our calls. We did, however locate a couple of Marsh Wrens. One came out to meet us – as much as a Marsh Wren will do. We followed his progress through the grass by watching the grass tops wiggle. At one point we tried to get pictures but he never exposed himself enough for a clear shot but it was fun tracking him!

This walk provided the potential to view shorebirds/waders, herons and egrets, gulls, and waterbirds, as well as songbirds in the trees skirting the marsh. We were there for about an hour, as the tide began to fall, and we identified 32 species. That made for an impressive list, including the Cooper's Hawk and Marsh Wren, a single Cedar Waxwing, Brown-headed and White-breasted Nuthatches, Hooded Mergansers (17), Willets (7), Herons (Great Blue, Little Blue, Tri-colored), Great Egret, Snowy Egret, White Ibis, and lots more. This was a good stop.

Hope to see everyone at the next LNBC Bird Walk. Happy Birding!

-Ronnie Hewlette

*LNBC Members
March 5, 2022
©Kevin O'Kane*



Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Checklist: Fort Macon/Area March 5, 2022

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

No.	Species	No.	Species	No.	Species
01.	Black Scoter	25.	Common Loon	49.	White-breasted Nuthatch
02.	Hooded Merganser	26.	Northern Gannet	50.	Brown-headed Nuthatch
03.	Red-breasted Merganser	27.	Double-crested Cormorant	51.	House Wren
04.	Pied-billed Grebe	28.	Brown Pelican	52.	Marsh Wren
05.	Horned Grebe	29.	Great Blue Heron	53.	Carolina Wren
06.	Rock Pigeon	30.	Great Egret	54.	European Starling
07.	Eurasian Collared-Dove	31.	Snowy Egret	55.	Gray Catbird
08.	Mourning Dove	32.	Little Blue Heron	56.	Brown Thrasher
09.	Clapper Rail	33.	Tricolored Heron	57.	Northern Mockingbird
10.	American Oystercatcher	34.	Black-crowned Night-Heron	58.	Eastern Bluebird
11.	Wilson's Plover	35.	White Ibis	59.	American Robin
12.	Killdeer	36.	Turkey Vulture	60.	Cedar Waxwing
13.	Ruddy Turnstone	37.	Osprey	61.	House Sparrow
14.	Sanderling	38.	Cooper's Hawk	62.	White-throated Sparrow
15.	Willet	39.	Belted Kingfisher	63.	Savannah Sparrow
16.	Greater Yellowlegs	40.	Red-bellied Woodpecker	64.	Song Sparrow
17.	Bonaparte's Gull	41.	Downy Woodpecker	65.	Swamp Sparrow
18.	Laughing Gull	42.	Northern Flicker	66.	Eastern Towhee
19.	Ring-billed Gull	43.	Eastern Phoebe	67.	Eastern Meadowlark
20.	Herring Gull	44.	Blue-headed Vireo	68.	Red-winged Blackbird
21.	Great Black-backed Gull	45.	Blue Jay	69.	Common Grackle
22.	Forster's Tern	46.	Fish Crow	70.	Boat-tailed Grackle
23.	Red-throated Loon	47.	Carolina Chickadee	71.	Yellow-rumped Warbler
24.	Royal Tern	48.	Tufted Titmouse	72.	Northern Cardinal

LNBC Photo Gallery

*Submissions welcome! Send your bird, wildlife, and nature photograph(s) to lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com
Full credit will be given to the photographer*



*New Yard Visitor!
Eastern Towhee
©Mike Creedon*



*Wilson's Plover
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette*



*Another new yard visitor!
Hermit Thrush
©Mike Creedon*



*Red-breasted Mergansers
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette*