



Lower Neuse Bird Club

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LNBC Meeting: Tuesday, November 1, 2022: Snakes!

Information Contributed by Olwen Jarvis

The LNBC will hold its monthly meeting at the Ministry Center of Garber United Methodist Church in New Bern on Tuesday, November 1st (right turn onto Fairway Drive if coming from US-70). Refreshments will be served at 6:30 PM, and the meeting will begin at 7:00 PM. Our guest speaker for November is Jeff Hall, Amphibian & Reptile Conservation Biologist for the NC Wildlife Resources, who will be giving a presentation titled, “**Birding for Snakes! Conservation and Safety Around NC’s Serpents**”. As most birders will most likely encounter snakes during some bird walks, this will help us to better understand and appreciate some of the non-bird species we find while birding. For more information, visit the Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Web Site at <https://ncparc.org/>



The speaker at the LNBC meeting on November 1st will be Jeff Hall, Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Biologist

LNBC Bird Walks for Nov. & Dec. 2022

Nov. 5: We will meet at Lawson Creek Park (downtown New Bern at the Trent Woods exit on US-70) at 8:00 AM. We will bird Lawson Creek Park and caravan to Simmons Street Wetlands afterwards.

Nov. 9-Nov. 10: Mid-week overnight stay in Nags Head (Wedn. & Thurs.) The long range forecast for these dates looks promising. Potential stops on the way to our destination at the Outer Banks include Pettigrew SP, Roper Catfish Ponds, Alligator River NWR, and more. During last year’s trip, we counted a total of 110 species! Details for this trip will be announced through the email list.

Dec. 3: Pamlico County/Oriental area bird walk (details TBA)

Dec. 18: Morehead City Christmas Bird Count
(contact: jofuss@ec.rr.com)

Dec. 19: New Bern Christmas Bird Count
(contact: wade@fullersmusic.com)

Dec. 20: Pamlico County Christmas Bird Count
(contact: dmidness@gmail.com)

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Annual Member Dues

by Christine Stoughton Root

With the start of the new Program Year, it is time to pay your annual membership dues if you have not already done so. Dues are \$15 per person and cover the Program Year from September 2022-May 2023. 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 with check or cash at a monthly meeting, or mailed to the club treasurer at:

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

LNBC Bird Walk – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 6, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette

Fall migration, plus the Quarry’s habitat makes for a great Bird-Walk in October.

The planned Bird Walk for the first Saturday in October was washed out due to rain and winds associate with the remnants of Hurricane Ian, that crossed the peninsula of Florida and then came inland through South Carolina, between September 28th and October 1st.

The Club’s event was rescheduled for Thursday, October 6th. Nine birders showed up to walk the loop of the Dragonfly Trail in search of Warblers and other migrants that might be found. The weather was perfect, with sunny skies and temps starting in the mid 50°s and climbing into the upper 70°s by mid-day.

As we gathered in the parking area, those that arrived a little early saw an Anhinga fly over. A second sighting, later in the morning, could have been the same individual or maybe it was Anhinga #2 in our area.

We picked up on a bird in the top of a tree on the “mountain” to the west of the parking area that looked to be bright orangish-red. What was that bird? Turns out it was a Carolina Wren – not supposed to be that high up in a tree and the sun intensified its color, so we were stumped for a while. It’s things like this that will make you humble.

With an eye to the sky, we picked up 4-5 Chimney Swifts flying overhead and as we entered the “Tunnel” we spotted a Red-eyed Vireo and several Northern Parulas. We would finish the morning with a Parula-count of 25-30. Outstanding!

One of the birds in the tunnel proved to be a Wilson’s Warbler and just about everyone got to see this yellowish, little bird with a black cap. Lots of Flickers were moving about and we added Red-bellied Woodpeckers, a Downey Woodpecker, a Pileated Woodpecker, and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. The Sapsucker was a “First-of-Season” sighting for several of us.



LNBC Members enjoy a morning of birding at Martin Marietta Park in New Bern.

*©Ronnie Hewlette
Oct. 6, 2022*



*Northern Parula
Martin Marietta Park*

*©Michael Cheves
Oct. 6, 2022*

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LNBC Bird Walk – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 6, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #2

Across the canal, as we focused on a tree full of Northern Flickers, we picked up a couple of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, chasing each other. Illuminated by the early morning sun, they displayed a white & gray “blur” as they chased each other in the sunshine!

At the first access to the Neuse River marsh, we eased down to the edge of the marsh and spotted three groups of 3 Wood Ducks. They didn't hang around long but even a glimpse of this gorgeously adorned duck is gratifying. There was a constant string of Laughing Gulls all morning, flying in from the river and heading West, almost to the point of being distracting. Warblers were the target for the day, and we saw our fair share. (Black-and-white Warbler, Orange-crowned Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Cape May Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Palm Warbler (Western), Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle), Wilson's Warbler).

It seems like the Gray Catbird population has exploded. I've seen more this fall that I have ever seen, and the Brown Thrasher population isn't too far behind. According to Cornell Lab's "AllAboutBirds" site "Gray Catbirds are common, and their populations have been stable from 1966 to 2019, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Partners in Flight estimates a global breeding population of 29 million and rates them 8 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score, indicating a species of low conservation concern. Catbirds tend to winter near the coast, making development of coastal habitat a possible concern for the future".

There was one bird that caused a bit of a stir. A Merlin was found perched on a bare limb in a tree next to the trail. No matter how much commotion we made, it just took it all in. Occasionally, it peered down at us, as if to look us in the eye. Not having much experience of seeing a Merlin at such a close distance, several of us reasoned that it was a Sharp-shinned Hawk, although the rounded tail did not fit with that conclusion. So there, another moment of humility, as some of us must confess that we jumped to a conclusion without considering all the obvious facts. Such a beautiful bird and to be so tolerant of us!

On our way around the Dragonfly Trail loop, we headed across the Causeway that separates two of the impoundments. This can be a productive location for a number of passerine species. We found a Yellow Warbler, an Orange-crowned Warbler, a Yellow-rumped Warbler, several Palm Warblers and finally Michael got a picture of a young Blue Grosbeak or a young Indigo Bunting. These can be so confusing, especially this time of year. The bill looked like an Indigo Bunting but the muted wing bars and other colors were more like a Blue Grosbeak, in my opinion. Final decision was that it was an Indigo Bunting but it took a second look. Love this thing called Birding!

-Ronnie Hewlette



*Wilson's Warbler
Martin Marietta Park*

©Michael Cheves
Oct. 6, 2022



*Indigo Bunting
Martin Marietta Park*

©Michael Cheves
Oct. 6, 2022

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Checklist – Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 6, 2022

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

No.	Species	No.	Species	No.	Species
01.	Wood Duck	19.	Pileated Woodpecker	37.	House Finch
02.	Pied-billed Grebe	20.	Northern Flicker (Yellow-shafted)	38.	Red-winged Blackbird
03.	Rock Pigeon	21.	Merlin	39.	Black-and-white Warbler
04.	Mourning Dove	22.	Eastern Phoebe	40.	Orange-crowned Warbler
05.	Chimney Swift	23.	Eastern Kingbird	41.	Nashville Warbler
06.	Yellow-billed Cuckoo	24.	Carolina Chickadee	42.	Common Yellowthroat
07.	Spotted Sandpiper	25.	Red-eyed Vireo	43.	American Redstart
08.	Laughing Gull	26.	Blue Jay	44.	Cape May Warbler
09.	Forster's Tern	27.	American Crow	45.	Northern Parula
10.	Anhinga	28.	Fish Crow	46.	Magnolia Warbler
11.	Double-crested Cormorant	29.	Tufted Titmouse	47.	Yellow Warbler
12.	Great Blue Heron	30.	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	48.	Blackpoll Warbler
13.	Turkey Vulture	31.	Carolina Wren	49.	Black-throated Blue Warbler
14.	Osprey	32.	House Wren	50.	Palm Warbler (Western)
15.	Belted Kingfisher	33.	European Starling	51.	Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle)
16.	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	34.	Gray Catbird	52.	Wilson's Warbler
17.	Red-bellied Woodpecker	35.	Brown Thrasher	53.	Northern Cardinal
18.	Downy Woodpecker	36.	Northern Mockingbird	54.	Indigo Bunting



*Merlin at Martin Marietta Park, Oct. 6, 2022
All photos ©Ronnie Hewlette*

LNBC Meeting Minutes – October 11, 2022

by Jenni Ford

MINUTES: Lower Neuse Bird Club meeting of October 11, 2022

Ronnie Hewlette opened the meeting at Garber UM Church. The 25 attendees included several new members and visitors.

Members were reminded that annual membership dues of \$15 can be paid to Treasurer Christine Root by cash or check at monthly meetings or by mail.

Sally Rowe reiterated that she is ready to hand over the role of Refreshments Captain; all meetings have a provider scheduled to provide refreshments for the 2022/2023 season, so it is an easy role to fill. Anyone who would like to fill this position is asked to contact Sally or one of the co-Presidents.

Recent observations of notable birds in the area were discussed – primarily the return of old friends. The most recent visit to Martin Marietta Park (the former Quarry) produced 14 warblers. Wade reminded us that this time of year – in mid-migration everything is possible.

Upcoming walks/ events - Emails with additional details will be provided in advance of walks:

Nov 5th – Lawson Park/Simmons Street Wetlands weather permitting.

We will meet at Lawson at parking lot near the airplane and carpool to other locations.

Nov 1st – next monthly meeting - presenter Jeff Hall, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Biologist

Dates for Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) have been established:

Dec 18th Sunday – Carteret County

Dec 19th Monday – Craven County

Dec 20th Tuesday – Pamlico County

Program: “Structure is for the Birds” presented by Travis Kornegay, Central Coast Forest Manager for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission. Travis is responsible for managing 120K acres of local gamelands.

General theme: Structure of geographic features is more significant to birds and other wildlife than specific types of vegetation, which is a departure from past scholarship. (He mused: What did Chimney Swifts do before there were chimneys?)

Vertical structure – Canopy, Midstory, Shrub Layer, Ground Cover. It is difficult to have all of these in one location once the canopy has closed in.

Horizontal structure – grass to low shrub to high shrub to shrub-tree to low tree to high tree. Each of these areas and their proximity to other structures provides different resources for wildlife, thus attracting different birds.

Recent examples of how structure is more important than specific location:

Wild Turkey – requiring many different habitats over life cycle

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers – flooding provides similar habitat to fire but with advantage of greater height (more protection)

Swainson’s Warblers – riparian areas with thick plant structures helped him locate these birds in unexpected locations

Paying attention to structure will help birders with ID, design targeted trips to locate specific species, choose spots with maximum vertical and horizontal structures to maximize potential species to ID.

In absentia Olwen Jarvis provided the refreshments for the meeting with the assistance of Leigh Hart who delivered them to the meeting.

Lower Neuse Bird Club

Species Profile – Tricolored Heron

by Alex Warnick, reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* Sept/Oct 2022 with permission.
See <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com>

My first tricolored heron was literally a blur. While driving across Florida's Merritt Island on a family road trip, I leaned my head against the car window, focusing my eyes on a distant point as hazy forms of waders floated past. I was more interested in a package of Fig Newtons than the fauna outside. Most ten-year-olds would be. Just a few months later, birding suddenly blossomed into a lifetime obsession, but that obsession and our Merritt Island trip were two ships passing in the night.

As the eccentric youngest of seven, I dragged a whole crowd to our local bird patch. My family kindly catered to my fascination, but they had one rule: We will not stop for sparrows. Waders were another matter. At the sighting of any green heron or great blue heron, we took turns passing around a creaky pair of binoculars.

At home, I pulled out my life list, eager to check off any new additions. Scanning the ranks, I passed tricolored heron. I screwed my face up in concentration, willing one of the Merritt Island blurs to have three colors... Phooley.

Eventually, my identical twin sister, Shae, joined me on my birding journey. In college, when the alarm went off, we'd rub the dust from our eyes, spy sunshine through the blinds, and decide to go birding. "What about class?" you might ask. That's what our parents said. With time, we gained the muscles of responsible birders, restricting bird watching to weekends, walks to campus, and lulls in class lectures.

Audubon's painting of a tricolored heron portrays the bird in a tangled bayou so misty and humid you can almost hear the buzz of mosquitos and the growl of the alligators. It's a glimpse into the wild southern states that served as an incubator for American ornithology as the shared destination of the continent's most intrepid bird explorers – Mark Catesby, Alexander Wilson, and John James Audubon. These artists linked arms with science and brought America's birds to the masses revealing what was hidden in the hinterlands.

Audubon affectionately called the tricolored heron "Lady of the Waters." A former genus name was *Hydranassa*, or "water queen." For centuries viewers have been impressed by the bird's elegance. I was no exception. On Merritt Island – first stop on our spring break tour – I raised my binoculars at a distant wader and brought a ten-year blur into focus. The tricolored I saw was willowy even for a heron. Weighing a mere fourteen ounces with a three-foot wingspan, I imagined that giving one a toss would feel like throwing a paper airplane. Audubon wrote, "Its measured steps are so light that they leave no impression on the sand."

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Feeding Behavior:

Preferring to change its hunting strategy rather than settle for second class prey, the tricolored heron displays a greater variety of feeding behaviors than other herons. The most common behavior is a "walk-quickly-run-open-wing" sequence that consists of quick sprints and pirouette turns with wings outstretched. It can also be seen stalking, standing, running, crouching, and hopping. It will employ underwing feeding, reaching its head beneath its arched wings in order to hunt for fish in the shade. It utilizes foot stirring, foot raking, foot dipping, and foot dragging in order to attract and stir up prey, and will wade up to its belly in search of fish, deeper than any other medium-sized heron.

Its diet consists mostly of fish, especially minnows and killifish. It will also eat amphibians, crustaceans, gastropods, leeches, insects, spiders, and worms. It defends its feeding territories and prefers to dine alone. If an abundance of food attracts a large flock of waders, the tricolored heron will often keep its distance from the group.



Tricolored Heron
Pine Knoll Shores, June 7, 2018
©Michael Cheves

Species Profile – Tricolored Heron

by Alex Warnick, reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* Sept/Oct 2022 with permission.
See <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com> Continued from Page #6

I watched as the bird hunted for killifish some distance from a flock of roseate spoonbills. Its actions seemed familiar. A moment's reflection pegged it: Growing up we were amused by my brother McKay, who ran everywhere, even a distance of ten feet from the couch to the refrigerator. Tricolored herons are the McKays of the bird world. While most heron species stealthily stalk their prey, the tricolored heron dashes and dances to its next meal, its energy exceeded only by the reddish egret. Years later I would see them again at the Oviedo Lagoon in the Dominican Republic, where their charisma would outshine even a flock of flamingos.

Tricolored herons were a constant as Shae and I ping-ponged around Florida's coast. Since their maverick nature compels them to ride the edge of mixed feeding groups, we spotted them easily. They're also an abundant bird, even historically, as their population was never a target of the millinery trade. Despite their plumes lacking the drama of their larger cousins, the small heron wears them well. I photographed a preening male in a rare moment of stillness, twisting his head, stretching his wings and raising every feather like porcupine quills. His white crown plumes waved like little banners. The bird was close enough that his usually muddled colors were clearly defined – milky white, blue, violet, and peach.

Mark Catesby somehow missed the species during his 18th-century southern tour. It took half a century longer for specimens to find their way to Europe and into the Count de Buffon's book *The Natural History of Birds*. Shortly after, Philipp Müller dubbed it *Ardea tricolor* based on the illustration Buffon included. Alexander Wilson, not recognizing the living bird as the same described by Buffon, thought he had discovered a new species and named it the Louisiana heron. This common name stuck for 150 years only to be replaced by Müller's original scientific moniker tricolor in 1982.

What three colors does the bird's name refer to? In the course of a year, the adult sports up to four colors as well as a cerulean face and magenta legs. Traveling through Florida in April, Shae and I encountered many scrappy juveniles, whose hues truly were limited to three – blue, rusty orange, and white. We had just missed the birds' courtship displays when adult plumes and colors are advertised to best advantage in a choreography of bows and stretches.

Our trip to Florida looked very different from Wilson's or Audubon's more than two centuries ago. For Shae and me, the Miami skyline rose behind flocks of ruddy turnstones, and refuge boardwalks were filled with speed-walking retirees. A friendly eccentric even popped out dentures for us as we searched for anhingas. Most nights we parked at gas stations to sleep, since there weren't enough hours to warrant a hotel before we wanted to be off again.

What to look and listen for:

Tricolored herons are especially lanky with proportionately longer legs and bill than other herons. Their small stature, combined with a dark back and white belly, is diagnostic, as the only other heron to share the same combination is the much larger great blue heron.

Tricoloreds have a gray-blue body with mauve patches on the head, base of the neck, and back. A white stripe running down the front of the neck connects to a white belly and underwings. Adults have white head plumes that extend from the crown like little flags.

Juveniles are the same gray-blue with white undersides, but their neck and shoulders are tinted with rusty brown and they lack the white head plumes. During the breeding season adults' dull colored legs turn bright pink, and the yellow skin at the base of their bill is replaced by blue. They gain long peach-colored plumes at the base of their back, forming a pale patch that is visible even from a distance. When flying, they tuck their necks into the shape of an "S" while their legs trail behind.

The tricolored is usually silent except when disturbed or during nesting activities. Its call is typically scratchy and nasal, but it can issue a guttural croak when flushed or alarmed. Both males and females rattle their bills during courtship displays.

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

Species Profile – Tricolored Heron

by Alex Warnick, reprinted from *Bird Watcher's Digest* Sept/Oct 2022 with permission.
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Like those early bird explorers, my travels compelled me to express my experiences in paint. A steady parade of oystercatchers, wood storks, and Florida scrub-jays came and went on my easel. But the tricolored heron was my longest undertaking. When I finally had the chance to sit down and design the painting, I created a series of tiny thumbnail sketches, each in various dancing poses. I knew I wanted to capture the bird mid-choreography and highlight the plumes that could stand on end like porcupine quills.

The bird kept me company in the studio for six months, patiently watching in the background as I worked on other paintings and mulled over how to arrange his feet and feathers. In the end, I designed the pose to mimic a balanced fan, his wing like a row of harp strings you could metaphorically strum in a harmonious octave. He even accompanied me on a road trip to Illinois to teach a workshop on painting birds. Adding his finishing touches saw me through the beginning of lockdown in 2020. When most of us were stuck at home and dreaming of travel, he was jet-setting to his final destination in San Francisco.

The world changes faster than birds do. While centuries separate one intrepid set of explorers camping in Florida's bayous from another set camping in Florida's parking lots, it's the same willowy heron that compels us to paint it. It took 20 years for me to turn the tricolored blur we sped past on Merritt Island into a dancing heron. Here's hoping he's off to inspire someone else to look closer and bring a blur of feathers into focus.

Alex Warnick is a natural history artist based in southern Indiana. She works with scientific institutions to highlight the world's bird life. She is a recipient of the Donald and Virginia Eckelberry Endowment from the Academy of Natural Sciences and was recently an artist in residence at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute. If you don't find her outside watching birds, then you'll find her inside painting them.



Tricolored Heron at Fort Macon SP, July 12, 2018
©Michael Cheves

Where and when to look:

Tricolored herons can be found in shallow coastal marshes, swamps, lagoons, rivers, mudflats, salt marshes, tidal creeks, mangrove swamps, and open shallow bays. They are coastal birds closely tied to salt water, but they will visit freshwater marshes and swamps found near coasts. They tend to prefer natural habitats and frequent manmade bodies of water less often than other herons. On the Atlantic Coast, their range extends from northern Maine, hugging the Gulf of Mexico and Central America, to the mouth of the Amazon in northern Brazil. On the Pacific Coast, their range extends from northern Mexico to Lima, Peru, as well as the Baja Peninsula and southern California during the nonbreeding season. They're also found inland throughout Florida and the Caribbean Islands. While they can be seen as far north as New Jersey during the winter, the majority of tricolored herons winter south of the United States. After the breeding season, vagrants have been known to wander as far north and inland as Colorado, Ohio, and Oregon.



LNBC Photo Gallery

All submissions welcome. Send your bird and nature photographs to lowerneusebirdclub@gmail.com. Full credit will be given to the photographer, and photographers will retain all rights to their work.



Australian Figbird, Nelly Bay, Queensland, Australia
©Mike Creedon, October 2022



Crimson Finch, Aloomba, Queensland, Australia
©Mike Creedon, October 2022



Golden Bowerbird, Upper Baron, Queensland, Australia
©Mike Creedon, October 2022



White-cheeked Honeyeater, Kaban, Queensland, Australia
©Mike Creedon, October 2022

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*Double-barred Finch, Walkamin, Queensland, Australia
©Mike Creedon, October 2022*



*Dunlin
New Bern Regional Airport, October 21, 2022
©Michael Cheves*



*Greater Yellowlegs
New Bern Regional Airport, October 21, 2022
©Michael Cheves*