

# Lower Neuse Bird Club



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## LNBC Annual Holiday Party

by Les Coble

Season's Greetings from LNBC! All members are invited to the Annual Holiday Party on Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup> starting at 5:00 PM. Thank you to our hosts this year, Olwen and Bill Jarvis. The gathering will be at their home in Fairfield Harbour, address: 5620 Gondolier Drive, New Bern 252-637-7748

Each LNBC member and one guest is invited. Please bring a dish to share. Some beer and wine will be provided, and some members also tend to bring a bottle. The gracious Jarvis' are providing a spiral-cut ham and a salmon with crackers. Some desserts will also be provided. Come and enjoy their hospitality as we appreciate fellow members and their contributions during the year to our birding education and enjoyment club.

## LNBC Holiday Party: Driving and Parking Directions

You may park on the side of the road opposite/across the Jarvis' driveway. Do not park on their side of the road. Soaking rains have not been in our area for a while, but I would caution you to be careful putting all four wheels off the road surface. You may also park in their driveway, but again, Not on the grass. Keep all four wheels on the driveway surface.

Directions:

1. From the Rt. 55 and Broad Creek R. intersection, travel down Broad Creek Rd. 5.7-miles to Cassowary Lane
2. Turn right onto Cassowary and check in at the gate as attending the Gathering at Olwen and Bill Jarvis, 5620 Gondolier Dr.
3. Just ahead is a stop sign. Turn right on Caracara Dr. and travel 0.4-miles
4. Turn left onto Pelican Dr. and travel 1.5-miles
5. Turn left onto Gondolier Dr. and travel 1.1-miles to #5620

## LNBC Upcoming Schedule

**Sunday, December 11, 5:00 PM:** Annual Holiday Party (hosted by Olwen & Bill Jarvis) (no meeting this month)

**Sunday, December 18:** Morehead City Christmas Bird Count

**Monday, December 19:** New Bern CBC

**Tuesday, December 20:** Pamlico County CBC

**Tuesday, January 3, 6:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting at Garber United Methodist, New Bern

**Saturday, January 7:** First Saturday Bird Walk (details TBA)

**Saturday, February 4:** First Saturday Bird Walk

**Tuesday, February 7, 6:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting at Garber UMC

**Saturday, March 4:** First Saturday Bird Walk

**Tuesday, March 7, 6:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting at Garber UMC

**Saturday, April 1:** First Saturday Bird Walk

**Tuesday, April 4, 6:30 PM:** Monthly Meeting at Garber UMC

*Additional Bonus Trips will be planned as opportunity arises. Please check your emails for announcements.*



Now accepting orders for official LNBC T-Shirts! See Page #20 for details.

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Meeting Minutes – November 1, 2022

by Jenni Ford

Wade Fuller opened the meeting at Garber UM Church. 21 bird enthusiasts were in attendance.

Members were reminded that annual membership dues of \$15 are now past due. Payment can be made to Treasurer Christine Root by cash or check at monthly meetings or by mail.

LNBC is looking for someone to fill the role of Refreshments Captain for the 2022/2023 season. The person(s) filling this role coordinates with refreshment providers for each meeting. The Club provides funds for paper plates, napkins, cups, etc. Anyone who would like to fill this position is asked to contact Sally Rowe at [sdrowe106@yahoo.com](mailto:sdrowe106@yahoo.com) or one of the co-Presidents.

Wade discussed LNBC t-shirts. A signup sheet was circulated to determine interest; the minimum order is 12 shirts. Members will probably be charged \$20 per shirt.

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

Sat Nov 5<sup>th</sup> – Lawson Park/Simmons Street Wetlands weather permitting. Participants will meet at Lawson at parking lot near the airplane and carpool to other locations.

Nov 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> – overnight trip to Pea Island on the Outer Banks. Two full days of birding with many other stops not all of which have been decided yet. Refer to emails and the November newsletter for the most up-to-date details.

There will be no December meeting.

Dec 11 – December holiday party in lieu of a December meeting. Olwen & Bill Jarvis have graciously volunteered to host this year.

Tues Jan 3<sup>rd</sup> – We do not have a speaker yet for the January meeting

Dates for Christmas Bird Counts (CBC):

Dec 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday – Carteret County

Dec 19<sup>th</sup> Monday – Craven County

Dec 20<sup>th</sup> Tuesday – Pamlico County

Program: Jeff Hall, who gave a very enthusiastic presentation “Birding for Snakes! Conservation and Safety Around NC’s Serpents”, is the Biologist for Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC).

The presentation was cram-packed with takeaways: Most important was snake awareness. The more familiar a naturalist is with species characteristics, the more prepared s/he will be.

Think of Safety First: Shape of head and aspect of eyes is not a reliable guideline for determining whether a snake is venomous. Most snakes are not venomous, i.e., most of those found in suburban yards. One should provide snakes time and space and they will stay out of the way. Move snakes only if necessary; permission is required from the landowner to have a snake relocated to their property; it is illegal to move snakes to state parks, recreation facilities, gamelands, etc.

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## LNBC Meeting Minutes – November 1, 2022

by Jenni Ford, continued from Page #2

If bitten and envenomated, go immediately to a hospital. Do not wait for symptoms to appear. Do not use snakebite kits. Do not take the snake to the hospital; treatment will be the same regardless.

Citizen Science: Use HerpMapper.org to report snake sightings.

Helpful resources:

herpsfnc.org,

*A Guide to Snakes of North Carolina* by Michael E. Dorcas,

*Amphibians and Reptiles of the Carolinas and Virginia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Revised and Updated by Jeffrey C. Beane and others

Thank you to Bill Kulp for providing refreshments for the meeting.

## LNBC Bird Walk – Lawson Creek & Simmons St., Nov. 5

by Ronnie Hewlette

The planned Bird Walk for the first Saturday in November was scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 8:00 AM from the parking area at Lawson Creek Park in New Bern, NC. Only four birders showed up, but all were eager and ready to see what we might encounter as we walked the Lawson Creek Park Area, including the Jack's Island Marsh, followed by a stop across town at Simmons Street Park.

A formation of three Great Egrets flew overhead in the direction of the Trent River as we relocated our vehicles to the parking lot by the picnic pavilion. This location is better suited for walking the board-walk loop across the road and the loop around Jack's Island.

From the parking area we had a good view of the gulls on the nearby fishing pier. This provided an opportunity to discuss the field marks for the various species of gulls in the area. Pink legs, yellow legs, black legs, in combination with bill colors, size and markings, along with body shape and size might come to bear, even before you consider body, wing and head colors. Ugh..... so much to remember. Practice, practice.....practice!!! Oh, don't forget the breeding vs. non-breeding plumage, as well as the transitional first 2 or 3 or 4 years it takes to mature.

Entering the boardwalk across the road we encountered another Great Egret that was walking the railing. It showed no concern for us being there as we walked past.

Where the board walk ended, we continued the loop on a dirt path that leads back to the road. We heard and found a mixed group of Song and White-throated sparrows, Brown Thrashers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Red-winged Blackbirds. The Red-winged Blackbirds were females, perched in a treetop, backlit by the sun. A hasty ID can sometimes be wrong in situations such as these. This provided another opportunity to talk about the sometimes-difficult process of identifying the females when the males are not present.

We tried calling an Orange-crowned Warbler several times, but nothing showed up.



*Great Egret  
Nov. 5, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette*

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## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Bird Walk – Lawson Creek & Simmons St., Nov. 5

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #3

Back out on the road we walked toward the Trent River Boat-ramp. In the marsh to our left we stopped to scan for birds. A Great Blue Heron was spotted where it was perched in a leafless tree across the marsh. Its colors blended-in quite well with the surroundings, making it easy to be overlooked. At the boat-ramp, we turned back northeast, continuing along the marsh. We had a better view of the Great Blue Heron in the tree but from this point of view we saw five more Great Blue Herons. A second was in the same tree and along the edge of marsh, near the trees we could see four more. What an unexpected find!

We went on to check out Jack's Island, finding more Yellow-rumped Warblers, Mockingbirds, gulls, Coots and Mallards. We chased a Pied-billed Grebe to the far end of the picnic area to confirm it was not something else that has a longer neck.

In this location we added another Great Egret. We didn't find any Snowy Egrets or Little Blues, but there were plenty of the Great Egrets all around.

Continuing down the road, we encountered a lot of Common Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds (mostly males, this time), bringing up a conversation about the difficulty of identifying these correctly when in flight or when perched and the red shoulder is not apparent. Again, it comes back to practice and practice and more practice. Consideration of body-size, bill-shape, tail length, and other markings is helpful but best of all, identification by voice can be conclusive. Other similar species can make it even more confusing and frustrating. Think about other species that have a similar appearance, such as Cowbirds or Starlings or Rusty Blackbirds. Whoa!

Our next stop was out in the marsh, a potentially good habitat for Rails and Marsh Wrens. As we walked the boardwalk over the marsh, Wade played the calls of a Marsh Wren – nothing responded except for some sparrows and Carolina Wrens that didn't necessarily like our intrusion.

Walking farther along, we heard the distinct “poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody” song of the White-throated Sparrows. That's such an uplifting song, in my opinion. And the appearance of this bird is notable, with its white throat, black and white bands on its head and a bright yellow supraloral dot/dash.

As we turned to leave, we heard a rail call, possibly in response to Wade's earlier call of the Marsh Wren. Playing the call of the King Rail we got a response and then we heard a Marsh Wren's chatter. Then another, and another, scattered out across the marsh. I located at least four by ear and we agreed there could be at least double that, all calling at the same time. What a chorus! I've never encountered that many Marsh Wrens, all singing at one time!



Common Grackle  
Nov. 5, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette

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## LNBC Bird Walk – Lawson Creek & Simmons St., Nov. 5

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #4

Leaving the marsh on the creek, we looked back across the marsh toward the Trent River boat-ramp and got a glimpse of a Northern Harrier gliding low over the marsh. That final sighting brought us to a total of 30 species for the two hours and 1.38 miles that we walked at Lawson creek Park, this morning.

We returned to our vehicles and proceeded across town to Simmons Street Park, parking on the West end, near the railroad crossing on Simmons Street.

Crossing the road, we immediately saw some birds moving on the path ahead of where we were standing. These proved to be American Crows and they disbursed as we approached. As we came to the first fork in the path, we flushed two Sharp-shinned Hawks from a clump of small pine trees. Identified by their smaller body size, long barred, squared-off tail with a noticeable white terminal band, these guys didn't hang around. They were off the radar before we could say "Sharp-shinned"!

We were hoping to find some rails, or a Sora or maybe a Wilson's Snipe at this location. The habitat looked good, although a bit overgrown and we found low but adequate water levels in the ponds. Walking along the ponds, looking and listening for anything, resulted in only a few birds to add to our list. The day has become somewhat warm, with the clearing skies and not much is moving. We walked past the pumps and back to the south-end where the path ends at the raised railroad bed. The predominant species we encountered was the Red-winged Blackbird. Really? -- not surprising, in this habitat! Finally, we heard a Gray Catbird (where have you been hiding?). Making our way back to the parking area, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was observed by the pumps and to finish off this morning's Bird Walk, we located an Eastern Phoebe, as we approached our vehicles. This quick stop added eight species to the list for today's adventure, with the sighting of the Sharp-shinned Hawks being the highlight! Remember – practice, practice, practice, if you want to be confident with your bird ID's!

-Ronnie Hewlette



Great Blue Heron, Nov. 5, 2022 ©Ronnie Hewlette

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Checklist – Lawson Creek & Simmons St., Nov. 5

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

| No. | Species                  | No. | Species                | No. | Species                |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 01. | Canada Goose             | 14. | Northern Harrier       | 27. | European Starling      |
| 02. | Mallard                  | 15. | Sharp-shinned Hawk     | 28. | Gray Catbird           |
| 03. | Pied-billed Grebe        | 16. | Belted Kingfisher      | 29. | Brown Thrasher         |
| 04. | Mourning Dove            | 17. | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 30. | Northern Mockingbird   |
| 05. | Yellow-billed Cuckoo     | 18. | Northern Flicker       | 31. | American Robin         |
| 06. | King Rail                | 19. | Eastern Phoebe         | 32. | White-throated Sparrow |
| 07. | American Coot            | 20. | Blue Jay               | 33. | Song Sparrow           |
| 08. | Laughing Gull            | 21. | American Crow          | 34. | Swamp Sparrow          |
| 09. | Ring-billed Gull         | 22. | Carolina Chickadee     | 35. | Red-winged Blackbird   |
| 10. | Double-crested Cormorant | 23. | Tufted Titmouse        | 36. | Common Grackle         |
| 11. | Great Blue Heron         | 24. | House Wren             | 37. | Yellow-rumped Warbler  |
| 12. | Great Egret              | 25. | Marsh Wren             | 38. | Northern Cardinal      |
| 13. | Turkey Vulture           | 26. | Carolina Wren          |     |                        |



*White-throated Sparrow, Nov. 5, 2022*  
 ©Ronnie Hewlette

## LNBC Trip Report – Pea Island Overnight Nov. 9-10

by Ronnie Hewlette

What an exciting Birding Adventure we had, as the Lower Neuse Bird Club visited the Pea Island NWR on the Outer Banks in early November!

We rendezvoused at the Beaufort County Rest Area on Hwy-17, outside Chocowinity, NC on Wednesday November 9<sup>th</sup>. This is an annual 2-day trip for the Club to the Outerbanks to visit Pea Island Ponds, Alligator River NWR and other areas along the way. Eleven birders gathered at the Rest Area and by 7:30 AM we were on our way. However, due to an accident on the US 17 Bridge over the Tar River (Washington Bypass), it took us 30 minutes to go the next eight miles. But that didn't diminish our spirits and we were at the Vernon James Research Station, near Roper in a short while.

It was a comfortable 53°, under overcast skies, but the wind was vicious at 14-16+ MPH out of the North – hang on to your hat! As we drove into the cutover fields along Research Station Road, we heard Horned Larks calling. Stopping to investigate, we saw some birds moving in the far fields. Maybe those were the birds calling? Hundreds of Ring-billed gulls were working the fields in the distance. We got a quick view of a Sharp-shinned Hawk and 2 or 3 Bald Eagles and then the Horned Larks got up and flew our way. Flying into the wind they almost hovered overhead, leaning into the wind, their obvious black undertail color couldn't be missed. Wow, what a sight!

Continuing along the road, we spotted a number of Meadowlarks, Chipping Sparrows, a couple of American Kestrels, and a Palm Warbler. The second Kestrel looked more like a Merlin because it did not show the bright colors we expected. It was moving fast, boosted by the strong winds and would not let us get close enough to confidently make it into a Merlin. Both birds looked similar in flight.

Our next stop was on Shore Drive, outside Creswell, NC on the West side of Phelps Lake at Pettigrew State Park. After a quick walk out to the lake where we saw nothing on the water or in the cypress woods along the way, we jumped back into our vehicles and headed off to the other side of Phelps Lake for a stop at the boat-ramp. We parked at the State Park Office Parking Area and walked to the boat-ramp where we were hopeful of seeing something interesting. Not very many birds were moving along the walk to the ramp, apparently due to the relentless wind. However, as we approached the edge of the lake, the exposed mudflat and the lake-edge wetlands we spotted a Marsh Wren. It responded to our call and was seen briefly one more time. Out on the lake we spotted some activity and with patience and determination were able to identify a Red-throated Loon, 5-6 Common Loons, a Horned Grebe, all mixed in with several dozen Double-crested Cormorants and a raft of Buffleheads in the distance. "Patience and determination" were necessary, as the wind was still whippin' and the roll on the water made the diving waterfowl "disappear" from view, more than normal. These conditions made you want to "tie-down" your spotting scope to prevent it from blowing over. There were lots of Laughing Gulls here and a few Forster's Terns, sitting on pilings, along with a Belted Kingfisher. Well, we are adding to our list – not a long list yet, but these sightings are a good start.



*Horned Lark*  
Nov. 9, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette



*Sharp-shinned Hawk*  
Nov. 9, 2022  
©Michael Cheves



## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Trip Report – Pea Island Overnight Nov. 9-10

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #7

By now, it's getting close to noon, and although we had planned to do lunch at Pocosin Lakes NWR Visitor Center in Columbia, we decided to go back to our vehicles and with permission from the Park Rangers, we drove down to the boat-ramp area's picnic tables for lunch. We were somewhat protected from the North winds to the point that the mosquitoes in the nearby cypress woods came out to greet us – Really BIG guys – the kind that cast a shadow when they approach! Whoa!

With a quick stop at the borrow pit on US-64 on the way to Columbia (looking for Cackling Geese), we continued down US-64, crossing the Scuppernong River at Columbia. Traveling through the Alligator River Gamelands, we stopped at J. Morgan Futch Game Land, driving a short distance off the highway to a locked gate. This was where we got really good looks at Song Sparrows and were able to hear them over the sound of the wind in the treetops. A single Mallard flew over, making us all turn and look as it flew out of sight. An Eastern Phoebe struck a pose on a limb out over a drainage ditch as we were being entertained by the Song Sparrows and a group of Tree Swallows was seen as we scanned the sky for Vultures, Hawks, Harriers, etc.

Crossing the Alligator River, we entered the Alligator River NWR and turned off US-64 onto Buffalo City Road, driving south to the end of the road at the Sandy Ridge Trailhead on Mill Tail Creek. This is such a cool place to be. You have the feeling you are completely removed from civilization, well maybe with an over-active imagination, anyway. There is a kayak launch, providing a short access to the Mill Tail Creek that is almost ¼ mile wide and 2.5 miles long at this location. With the closed-canopy forest, the winds don't seem so annoying, so we proceeded to walk down the trail about 100 yards. The trail continues on about ¾ mile to Sandy Ridge Road, but we don't have time to go that far today.

This stop did not produce a large number of species but what we found was stellar! A Downy Woodpecker gave rise to close examination and discussion with characteristics of a Hairy Woodpecker. Only with a couple of photos that “suggested” there were “downy spots” on the outer tail feathers, did we get a consensus to call it a Downy Woodpecker. Then a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and a couple of Golden-crowned Kinglets spoke-up. By playing the call for the Golden-crowned Kinglet we got one to respond and to get really agitated. So agitated, that its bright yellow-orange mohawk of a crown-patch, seemed to be on fire! And for a bird that is usually concealed high up in dense trees, these were dancing from limb to limb, at eye-level, right in front of us. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet joined in, so there was no mistaking which was which. What a fascinating bird display to be witnessed on this short stretch of creek-side trail in this Cypress-Ecosystem!



Golden-crowned Kinglet  
Nov. 9, 2022  
©Michael Cheves

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## LNBC Trip Report – Pea Island Overnight Nov. 9-10

by Ronnie Hewlette, Continued from Page #8

Continuing through the Alligator River NWR, we traversed Sawyer Lake Rd. to Milltail Rd., to Long Curve Rd., to Link Rd., where we stopped to look and listen. I had not seen a Red-tailed Hawk so far this month but today I sighted at least six, along with several Kestrels, Northern Harriers, and vultures. A couple of Black Vultures were mixed in with some of the Turkey Vultures, that we saw in Tyrrell County. We saw and heard plenty of Yellow-rumped Warblers during the day, but this stop produced the most. The sound of an American Robin was (somehow) detected over the constant wind in the trees. That was a foreshadowing of the flock of about 75 American Robins that flew over us, just a few minutes later. As we left this stop, following Link Road, an Eastern Meadowlark flushed and quartered away into the wind. I had expected to find a lot more Meadowlarks in this area than we did. I guess the wind has them sitting tight.

Turning onto Bear Rd. we drove 1¼ miles to a spot of transition from open ground to forest, where a Black Bear was spotted, crossing the road. A BIG Bear! We eased closer, as this very large Black Bear crossed the roadside ditch on a single tree bridge. As we drove past, he sat and looked out from between two trees, giving us all a great view of his face. Wow, does it get any better? First “up close” bear-sighting for some of those in our party!

We’re “burning up day-light”, so we headed out to US-264, to turn East on US-64 and make our way to Nags Head. Turning South on Hwy-12 we arrived at Bodie Island Lighthouse & Pond at 4:40 PM. Sunset was around 5:00 PM, so we had about ½ hour of usable light left in the day.

It seemed to be blowing even harder and didn’t seem to want to let up as the day ended. When we reached the covered platform at the end of the Boardwalk, it was too much wind to deal with, so we retreated to the lee of the Observation Platform. Most of the waterfowl and wading birds that we could make out in the poor viewing conditions were just a taste of what we expected to see the next day.

On our way out, we stopped and played the call of a Marsh Wren and got a quick response. In this wind, that was quite an accomplishment, but following that event we heard a Rail calling. Playing the call of a Virginia Rail resulted in the appearance of one at the edge of the marsh, less than ten feet away. It was talking back to the call from its little hide-a-way in the marsh grass. It stayed there for several minutes, getting spooked and disappearing, but then returning to the same spot. What a special ending to a great first day! By the time we got to our lodging for the night (Comfort Inn South in Nags Head) it was dark.



*Virginia Rail*  
*Bodie Island Lighthouse,*  
*Nov. 9, 2022*  
©Ronnie Hewlette

*Continued on Page #10*

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Trip Report – Pea Island Overnight Nov. 9-10

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #9

The next morning, we had breakfast at the motel and were on the road to Pea Island Ponds by 8:00 AM. The winds had slackened a bit and it had warmed up from what we experienced the previous day. Our first stop was at South Pond Observation Platform, between South Pond and New Field Pond. This is where the list gets longer. Now we were looking at scattered waterfowl, waders, passerines and more. Our list of “To see” birds included Tundra Swans, Shovelers, Gadwalls, Black Ducks, Widgeons, Redheads, Pintails, American White Pelican, Herons and Egrets. As we were leaving, a Red-breasted Nuthatch flew into the bushes only a couple of feet from us and posed for us to get pictures. That was quite unexpected!

Crossing over Hwy-12 to the beach, we climbed the dune and scanned the beach and ocean for more birds. Several strings of Black Scoters were seen, headed South. Lots of Brown Pelicans, Northern Gannets and a mixture of gulls were seen swooping high and low, tossed about, and pounded by the wind. The waves were huge, being driven by the ESE wind!

Les identified a Brown Booby just beyond breakers in the trough of the waves, gliding southward. Described as all brown back with no white in uppertail area. Only the axillar area beneath showed a lighter area, tan in color. Size comparison not available on this lone bird. Initial observation suggested smaller than the Gannets and resulted in following this bird through the scope. Also listed were two Parasitic Jaegers, discovered at this same location.

Our next stop was at North Pond Wildlife Trail, just past the Visitor’s Center. This was an interesting stop, allowing all of us to add to our lists, including some infrequent finds. Redheads were identified by looking at photos of waterfowl on the north end of New Field Pond. Four Hooded Mergansers were identified and added to the list. An American Bittern was seen moving stealthily through the edge of the marsh when we first arrived, and everyone had a chance to locate it and check it out.

A Common Gallinule had been seen and reported at this location for several weeks and while we were looking at the Bittern, the Gallinule was spotted, hanging close to the edge of the marsh. Another great find for this day’s checklist and for some, it was a new Lifebird.

As we walked further along on the trail, a Horned Lark appeared in the trail ahead of us. That was another totally unexpected find for this location! It only stayed for a couple of minutes before leaving.

As all this was going on, a couple of Greater Yellowlegs flew over, giving its clear, ringing *tew tew tew* call.

It was still a bit breezy, but the clouds were scattering, and it was warming up. Time to come out of the jackets.

At this stop and at the South Pond stop we saw Savannah Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Eastern Meadowlarks, Gulls and Royal Terns, Boat-tailed Grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds. By far the most abundant waterfowl species was the Pintail, with thousands on all the ponds.



*Common Gallinule*  
Nov. 10, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette

*Conclusion on Page #11*

## LNBC Trip Report – Pea Island Overnight Nov. 9-10

by Ronnie Hewlette, Continued from Page #10

As it was getting close to noon, we needed to move on, so we headed north again to the Photo Blind on North Pond. This location produced the shorebirds that we had not seen elsewhere, all morning -- Black-bellied Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin, Short-billed Dowitcher, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs and Willet.

Our final stop for the day was at the Bonner Bridge Pier (near the Old Coast Guard Station) where we found Dark-eyed Juncos, a Seaside Sparrow and a Wilson's Snipe. These were the last three adds to our lists. We had a total species count of 57 on Day-1 and 55 on Day-2 with a combined count of 94 for the two days.

A trip to remember!

-Ronnie Hewlette



*Bodie Island Lighthouse, Nov. 9, 2022*  
©Ronnie Hewlette



*Black Bear at Alligator River NWR, Nov. 9, 2022*  
©Ronnie Hewlette



*LNBC Members at Pea Island, Nov. 10, 2022*  
©Ronnie Hewlette



*Fearless leader Les Coble, scanning the horizon at Pea Island, Nov. 10, 2022*  
©Jenny McDiarmid



## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### LNBC Checklist – Pea Island Nov. 9, 2022

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

| No. | DAY ONE-Species List     | No. | Species                | No. | Species                |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|------------------------|-----|------------------------|
| 01. | Tundra Swan              | 20. | Great Egret            | 39. | Ruby-crowned Kinglet   |
| 02. | Gadwall                  | 21. | Black Vulture          | 40. | Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| 03. | Mallard                  | 22. | Turkey Vulture         | 41. | Marsh Wren             |
| 04. | American Black Duck      | 23. | Northern Harrier       | 42. | Carolina Wren          |
| 05. | Northern Pintail         | 24. | Sharp-shinned Hawk     | 43. | European Starling      |
| 06. | Bufflehead               | 25. | Bald Eagle             | 44. | Gray Catbird           |
| 07. | Horned Grebe             | 26; | Red-tailed Hawk        | 45. | Northern Mockingbird   |
| 08. | Rock Pigeon              | 27. | Belted Kingfisher      | 46. | Eastern Bluebird       |
| 09. | Mourning Dove            | 28. | Red-bellied Woodpecker | 47. | American Robin         |
| 10. | Virginia Rail            | 29. | Downy Woodpecker       | 48. | Chipping Sparrow       |
| 11. | Killdeer                 | 30. | Hairy Woodpecker       | 49. | White-throated Sparrow |
| 12. | Laughing Gull            | 31. | Northern Flicker       | 50. | Song Sparrow           |
| 13. | Ring-billed Gull         | 32. | American Kestrel       | 51. | Swamp Sparrow          |
| 14. | Herring Gull             | 33. | Eastern Phoebe         | 52. | Eastern Towhee         |
| 15. | Forster's Tern           | 34. | American Crow          | 53. | Eastern Meadowlark     |
| 16. | Red-throated Loon        | 35. | Carolina Chickadee     | 54. | Red-winged Blackbird   |
| 17. | Common Loon              | 36. | Tufted Titmouse        | 55. | Brown-headed Cowbird   |
| 18. | Double-crested Cormorant | 37. | Horned Lark            | 56. | Palm Warbler           |
| 19. | Great Blue Heron         | 38. | Tree Swallow           | 57. | Yellow-rumped Warbler  |



*Red-breasted Nuthatch, Pea Island  
NWR, Nov. 10, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette*



## LNBC Checklist – Pea Island Nov. 10, 2022

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

| No. | DAY TWO-Species List | No. | Species                  | No. | Species               |
|-----|----------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| 01. | Canada Goose         | 20. | Least Sandpiper          | 39. | Snowy Egret           |
| 02. | Tundra Swan          | 21. | Short-billed Dowitcher   | 40. | Little Blue Heron     |
| 03. | Northern Shoveler    | 22. | Wilson’s Snipe           | 41. | Tricolored Heron      |
| 04. | Gadwall              | 23. | Greater Yellowlegs       | 42. | White Ibis            |
| 05. | American Wigeon      | 24. | Lesser Yellowlegs        | 43. | Northern Harrier      |
| 06. | Redhead              | 25. | Willet                   | 44. | Belted Kingfisher     |
| 07. | Mallard              | 26; | Laughing Gull            | 45. | Horned Lark           |
| 08. | American Black Duck  | 27. | Ring-billed Gull         | 46. | Red-breasted Nuthatch |
| 09. | Northern Pintail     | 28. | Herring Gull             | 47. | Carolina Wren         |
| 10. | Black Scoter         | 29. | Lesser Black-backed Gull | 48. | Dark-eyed Junco       |
| 11. | Bufflehead           | 30. | Great Black-backed Gull  | 49. | Seaside Sparrow       |
| 12. | Hooded Merganser     | 31. | Royal Tern               | 50. | Savannah Sparrow      |
| 13. | Pied-billed Grebe    | 32. | Northern Gannet          | 51. | Eastern Meadowlark    |
| 14. | Common Gallinule     | 33. | Double-crested Cormorant | 52. | Boat-tailed Grackle   |
| 15. | American Coot        | 34. | American White Pelican   | 53. | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| 16. | Black-bellied Plover | 35. | Brown Pelican            |     | <b>SEABIRDS:</b>      |
| 17. | Ssemipalmated Plover | 36. | American Bittern         | 54. | Parasitic Jaeger      |
| 18. | Marbled Godwit       | 37. | Great Blue Heron         | 55. | Brown Booby           |
| 19. | Dunlin               | 38. | Great Egret              |     |                       |



American Bittern, Pea Island NWR, Nov.  
10, 2022  
©Ronnie Hewlette

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### An OBX Encounter With Several Hundred Shorebirds

*A Non-Fiction Account of Several Birds in North Pond  
at Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge*

*by Les Coble*

#### *Prologue*

Identifying shorebirds outside the breeding territory is hard. Since none of us live near any breeding shorebird except Killdeer, and maybe Piping Plovers, we are always faced with birds that do not look like the depictions in many field guides. This challenge is exasperated by the shorebird not always being in the same habitat, or more so in lighting conditions that can and do fool the advance and experienced birder. Sometimes every birder feels they don't even have a chance. And, global warming has birds moving northward earlier and staying northerly longer, or overwintering in an area where they would not be expected, such as the Outer Banks.

#### *The Encounter*

*November 10, 2022, Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge, North Pond, 300 ft. south of the Photo Blind:*

The noontime weather is slightly warmer than seasonal, just above 70 degrees, but this seems to be the new normal. The wind is less than 10 mph so the scopes don't require a friend's steadying hand. It unerringly caresses our left cheek but which is warmed by the diffused, yet hazy, sunlight from the same southerly direction. We are looking somewhat northwest but at this time of year the sun is already coursing downward toward the horizon. Hazy light mutes even the more already dull colors of muddy grey and brown of the exposed flat. With the lowering sun we try to stay south of the bind of birds, though a contradiction would be a better name for these several hundred long distance migrants. Normal for the peck of assembling birders is the challenge to separate this flung mass of light grey, brownish gray and off-white into a list eBird might accept. You see these birds are juveniles and their feathery covers have no significant, if any, pattern akin to their long-departed parents. These are the reasons for the folk names contradiction, and flung.

Les uses his 8 power Swarovski binoculars to quickly scan the mostly sleeping contradiction. This is yet another field problem. They are a collective mass and individually a mass as their bills have been tucked beneath wings. This is a mechanism to preserve heat, contrary to both the pleasant air temperature and which is far warmer than the far north breeding grounds from whence these birds have flown.

Birds of three general sizes are seen. The largest are quickly considered Willets, at least that is Les and Bill Kulp's quick assessment and agreement. Neither disagree with the consensus. The smallest birds are thrown into a birder's class called peeps and then no distinction seems to be among those which are somewhere in size between the largest and smallest. Les realizes this is yet another late fall challenge in this contradiction. Maybe the collective experience of the group can help create order before a Peregrine Falcon zips overhead and shatters the sleepy scene. No matter how serene someone in the fling is always scanning the sky.

*Continued on Page #15*

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## An OBX Encounter

*by Les Coble, Continued from Page #14*

Four telescopes are posted atop tripods. Carol Reigle and Mary Kevin Welch share a Kowa. They are speaking as calmly as Jenny McDiarmid and Bill Kulp around his telescope. Les is now looking through his Kowa and hears Mike Cheves and Wade Fuller begin to view the scene. They arrived last and ask for Jenni Ford and Ronnie Hewlette. Ronnie has not been birding as long as Les and Wade but has an ever-growing mental data bank of bird identification details that are sought after whenever a bird seems to defy quick identification. Les expresses Ronnie is somewhere near the dike on the north end of the massive pond, an impoundment established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The “pond” is over 400 acres, twice the size of the two ponds to the south, yet a mere speck to the over 25,000 acres of water included in the Refuge oversight and to the Atlantic Ocean churning just behind the groups back. The birders from the Lower Neuse Bird Club are here on a yearly two-day foray to this mecca for wintering and passing-through birds. Two days gives scant time to explore the massive Refuge. Most birds are considered water birds, mainly ducks, waders and some shorebirds. The travelers are precariously protected from the pounding surf by a mere 20-foot-high dike of sand the Service attempts to maintain to protect the sliver of land that has not succumbed to the rising sea level, that ever-increasing threat spawned by the global warmed melting glaciers. Winds cut the tops of the dike, throwing the sand landward or oceanward. Residents on the Outer Banks know they may not be able to pass through this section of the slim barrier islands after any few days of constant wind, and especially the complete loss of the road bed from hurricane water damage. But the lure of the natural beauty and wind warmed by the nearby Gulf Stream means hope springs eternal against the overwhelming power of the weather.

Wade towers over the height challenged companions. He a lifelong birder and North Carolina resident and historian of the people of the eastern half of this huge State and a textbook of it's wildlife, especially the birdlife. The club looks to him for guidance on when and where to bird and what might be expected or unexpected. But, the Outer Banks has always been an enigma. Every year a bird that is expected to spend the winter far south seems to make the Banks it's winter home, or the warm conditions allowing a bird to linger long past the time it should have moved on with other birds to southern U.S., central America or South America.

Wade is studying the smallest of the birds on the mudflat. Les, with trepidation, has asked him to look at two of the peeps that had begun to walk along the mud, exposing bills that seemed to oddly curve downward. Les had seen a Semipalmated Plover, a small bird of only about 7 inches and knew these birds were slightly larger.

*Continued on Page #16*

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### An OBX Encounter

*by Les Coble, Continued from Page #15*

With the drab colors and ill-defined patterns of these young birds their size becomes a significant factor in searching for an identification. Dunlin are oft seen in November, but what about Purple Sandpiper? It should not be expected on a mudflat, but likely along the rock jetty as at the Bonner Bridge two miles north. Would a Purple Sandpiper disdain the wind and wave-soaked jetty for the protective lee of the pond? Would a northwestern U.S. bird, the Rock Sandpiper fly across Canada and then down the Atlantic Coast to layover at Pea Island? Highly improbable, but these rarities seem to be occurring with all species more commonly in recent decades. Curlew Sandpiper is seen on the Atlantic Coast somewhere every spring. Could one have strayed and is now lingering at Pea Island? The possibility is tantalizing. Wade sagely says they are Dunlin though the bill droops heavily near the tip and doesn't curve more gradually as the norm. One crisis of ID avoided.

Towering Wade uses his tall-set scope to view the other peeps on the mudflat. He can see the smallest of the peeps, birds like Western Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper and Least Sandpiper, all barely 6" in length but definitely smaller than the Dunlin and the three possibilities are considered. He queries a possible Western but we never learn his mental jockeying for among the bigger birds, the Willets, at the back of the conflagration, Les senses a sleeping bird that seems to be ever so slightly lighter than the Willets on either side. Willets are over a foot in length, Marbled Godwits are several inches larger, and he recalls one had been reported recently. Les calls to the discerning eye of Bill Kulp who is also now querying this less than grey bird that is far from the warm, beige color of a Marbled Godwit. What about a Hudsonian Godwit, a bird more the size of a Willet and the juveniles are a color between the gray of a willet and the beige of a Marbled Godwit, AND a Hudsonian Godwit had been reported recently? Well, maybe a look through the scope at higher power, more along 40 power than the 20 power used to scan bird flocks would yield a clue. No, the tucked bills and sitting position mutes potential clues.

Les patiently waits for Bill. Bill has been birding his former state of Maryland with a long-time friend of Les and Les knows he has an experienced eye, trained by our shared mentor,. Bill's Computer Assisted Drafting background has also created a trained eye for detail.

Les looks through his Kowa further from the intriguing bird and sees several birds of similar color. With several standing together the color is definitely beige. Bill is doing the same when these sleepers lift their bills, stand and begin to preen, a process where they straighten and clean their feathers. They quickly agree the beauty that is the hallmark of Marbled Godwits can be enjoyed by the birding companions as they announce the find. The satisfaction is in their voices as they talk without removing an eye from those scopes. One learns to enjoy many aspects of birding, especially the actions birds employ. Carol and Wade hear their report and turn their scopes to the area on the left of the conflagration as the now standing Godwits show the longer neck and less-round head shape and bigger body shape than Willets. Les and Bill finish the count and 8 Godwits are announced.

*Continued on Page #17*



## An OBX Encounter

by Les Coble, Continued from Page #16

This is the struggle with contradictions of mixed juvenile shorebirds. Carol thanks the group of announcing the Godwits and describing where to point her scope. Carol seems deterred by not finding them herself but Bill consoles her with a oft tried and true statement , “Don’t fret. You are not alone. I struggle with them every time I look at them.” Les listens and knows he sometimes gives up on some birds or flings without identifying them, in particular the frustratingly poorly patterned young shorebirds. Sometimes it is best to simply enjoy being in the presence of birds in the midst of a long journey.

As the group begins to wander back to their vehicles Bill calls out to Les to look at a bird he has focused in his telescope. Les jogs back and Bill’s discerning eye has seen yet another bird with almost no features as it, too has its bill and much of its head tucked in the resting position. Its belly is in the water and makes its larger size than the adjacent Dunlin, almost 3”, practically impossible to discern. Yes, “I agree” the body shape declares it is a Dowitcher. “A great call Bill. We all missed it.” A slight movement and the long bill of the dowitcher is briefly displayed as it repositions the bill under its wing. Call completely confirmed.

End of story.

### Epilogue

The names are real, the people are real. Some liberty was taken to relate the search for the species.

Additional Info for Your Reading:

Les is reminded birders must use shorebird size in both spring and fall migration comparing to a nearby bird and help limit the possible species. Judging the size of any individual bird can be difficult from a distance, the size extremely deceptive. With a single bird the vegetation size in the habitat may be a significant clue. Here is a photo by Jeff Bryant.



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## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### An OBX Encounter

by Les Coble, Continued from Page #17

Caitlyn Schuchhardt of Madison Audubon (Wisconsin) writes. “Both of the shorebirds in this photo are tiny compared to the Mallard, but the Pectoral Sandpiper (middle) is clearly larger than the Least Sandpiper. Notice how similar is their plumage and” [also of incredible field ID value is their body position as described further below] “their similar yellowish leg color.... Killdeer are plentiful and learning their size provides a good choice for size comparisons. So, if you see a bird that looks like a Least Sandpiper but is the size of a Killdeer, something is amiss. It may be a Pectoral Sandpiper instead.” Here is another photo, by Vicki DeLoach of a Semipalmated Sandpiper and Least Sandpiper. Forget for this example the Least has yellow legs. Look at the bill shape. It is subtle, but there. The Semipalmated Sandpiper has a straight bill and the Least Sandpiper bill very slightly droops.



Below is a photo typical of field problems in the fall – juveniles with little pattern associated with spring and breeding birds, and how body position can lead to questions on ID. These are Greater Yellowlegs on the left and Lesser Yellowlegs on the right.



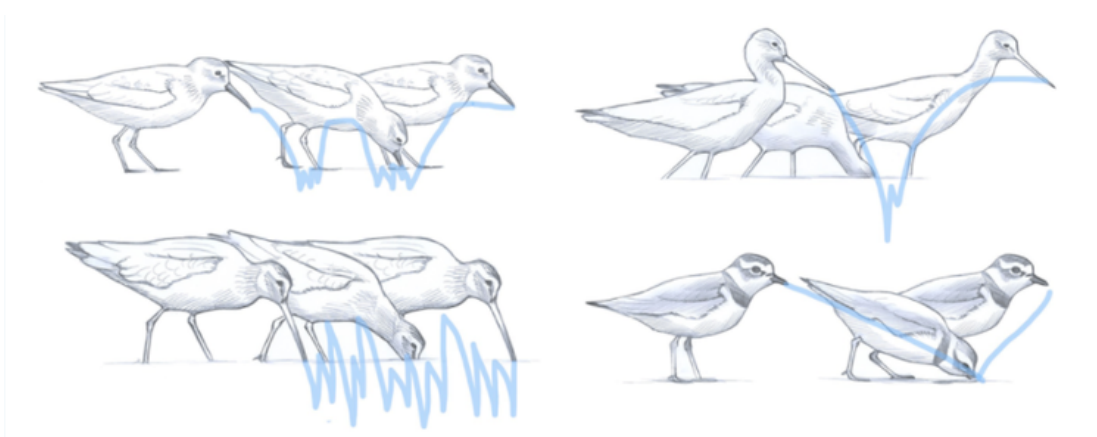
Continued on Page #19

## An OBX Encounter

by Les Coble, Continued from Page #18

Caitlyn Schuchhardt writes, “When I first starting looking at shorebirds, I could pick out the bird on the left as a greater yellowlegs due to its foraging posture and bill. But the bird on the right would definitely have confused me—it’s not showing the longer neck I associated with yellowlegs as they foraged. Birds are really good at confusing you with their postures, so be aware they might not always pose just like your field guide—a longer neck can easily be concealed! Look at the bill and the legs to get your bearings.” Note the bill length on the Greater Yellowlegs is not much longer than the length of the head, a field ID clue we most often use; that is, we often note the bill as almost two times the length of the head. They can be rather short!

In the illustration below from David Sibley is a great visualization, even more valuable in winter, of how certain groups of shorebirds move as they forage. The smallest shorebirds, the peeps as we call them like the Semipalmated and Least Sandpiper, will forage crouched with their heads low, always walking, picking and probing (top left in the illustration). Plovers, like the Semipalmated and Killdeer will run and pick at food, then run and pick again (bottom right in the illustration). Dowitchers will probe constantly, often described as a sewing machine action (bottom left). Yellowlegs will stroll along and pick at something, then keep strolling and picking as they see more food (top right)



In the illustration posture must also be considered. The Least Sandpiper and Dowitcher walk with their back parallel to the ground. The Semipalmated Plover walks upright as does the Yellowlegs. The Yellowlegs also may put its head completely below the water level when feeding.

*Conclusion on Page #20*

## Lower Neuse Bird Club

### An OBX Encounter

by Les Coble, Continued from Page #19

It has been noted many times, “Birds of a feather flock together.” While the idiom refers to people it was born in birds. Even in the contradiction November 10<sup>th</sup> the Dunlin tended to be grouped, the Willets were in a ragged line behind them and the Godwits off to the left of the Willets. In the spring there is significant stress to get to the breeding territory with feeding between stops frenetic. Yet, among the same species there is oft seen the beginnings of interest in males toward females, the interest varies due to the amount of hormonal increase that varies in each individual bird. Sometimes the action can be a male aggressive to another male or “pushy” to a female. She may ignore the overture, or aggressively rebuke or maybe simply observe the male. We cannot always know if the action is between two sexes or two males. The real upshot here is that two different species that can appear similar within the same area in the habitat can be aggressive due to not being of the same species. Some clues as to the presence of a different species that is being looked for (generally an unexpected bird already reported as being present) can be detected by the ousting of the odd species in the fling. So, again, we are constantly being reminded that action can be a telling, akin to recognizing the frenetic action of Kinglets as they forage or the tail bobbing of Phoebes and Hermit Thrushes.

### LNBC T-Shirts

by Wade Fuller

We have received requests from several members this season about getting an LNBC Tee shirt. At the last meeting we announced that we can get shirts through Bender Apparel that have the same LNBC emblem/logo as was used on our original Tee shirts from several years ago. Please see the attached pictures. The original run from years ago was done on a white shirt material. Several requested that we chose a more natural color. We have decided to go with a shade of medium brown for our shirts this time around along with our original emblem.

We had enough members sign up for a shirt to make a minimum order but before proceeding we want every member to have a chance to place an order. If you would like a shirt, **please let us know by Thursday, Dec 15**. Prices will be in the \$20 range +/- depending on how many orders we receive. Available sizes run from Small up to 4XL.

You can place an order with us by emailing Wade Fuller at [wade@fullersmusic.com](mailto:wade@fullersmusic.com) or calling at (252)-229-8012 and letting us know your name, phone number and size shirt that you need. You can pay when they arrive.

A second way to sign up is to enter your name, phone and size on a signup sheet that will be next to the LNBC Tee Shirt display at Olwen and Bill Jarvis's home during our Christmas Party on Sunday, Dec 11 (starts at 5pm).



LNBC T-Shirt Sample

Images: Front (top image) and Back (bottom image)