



# Northern Neck Audubon News

*The Northern Neck of Virginia Chapter of the National Audubon Society*

P.O. Box 991, Kilmarnock, Virginia 22482

www.northernneckaudubon.org

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Sharing Lunch

....Photo: Paul Servis

## Inside This Issue

The Picnic.....	2
Kestrel Project.....	3
Audubon Elsewhere .....	4
Photo Page.....	5
Bird Walk Overview.....	6
Bird Lore.....	7
Upcoming Bird Walks.....	7

## UPCOMING

### MEETINGS

Chapter Meetings held Upstairs

Lancaster Community Library

WITH EXCEPTION OF SEPTEMBER'S

### Monday, September 11th

5:00 PM Annual Picnic

Belle Isle State Park

(Board Meeting at 4:00)

6:00 PM Bird Walk

### Monday, October 2nd

3:15 PM

Program

...To Be Announced

### BIRD WALKS

Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>

Belle Isle

Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup>

Tangier

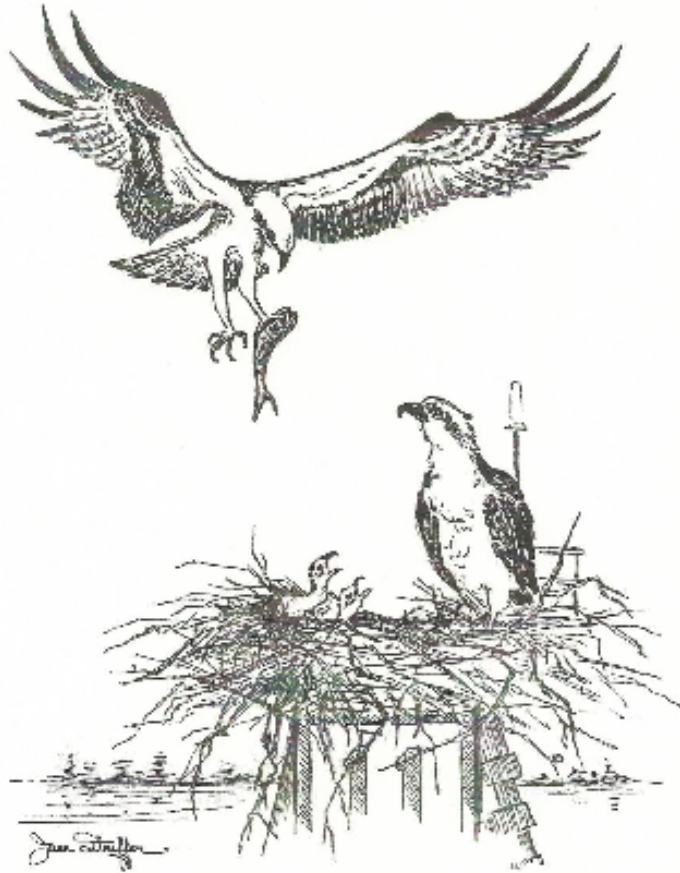
Monday, October 9<sup>th</sup>

Washington Birthplace

Saturday, October 21st

Hughlett Point

Walk Details on page 7.



## NORTHERN NECK AUDUBON SOCIETY

### Kick-off Picnic and Bird Walk

All are invited to our annual picnic and evening bird walk. The board will meet & set up at 4, followed by feasting at 5, then our only evening bird walk of the year will start at 6. Please bring a main dish, appetizer, salad, side, or dessert to share. We will provide drinks and picnic ware.

**To get to Belle Isle SP:** From Warsaw, take Rt 3 East to 354. Turn right, go three miles. Turn right onto SR 683 at Somers to the park entrance. From Kilmarnock, take Rt 3 West to Lively, then left on SR 201 for three miles, then right on SR 354 for three miles and left onto 683 to the park entrance. Picnic shelter #3 is past the visitor's center.

**September 11,  
Monday**

**5pm-8pm**

**Belle Isle SP,  
Shelter #3 (entry  
fee waived)**

**Board Meeting  
precedes feasting  
(4 PM)**

**Loaner Binoculars  
available**

### NORTHERN NECK AUDUBON SOCIETY

PO Box 991  
Kilmarnock, Va 22482

[www.northernneckaudubon.org](http://www.northernneckaudubon.org)

Contact:

Melissa Gross 301-980-2717

Or

Nancy Garvey 804-436-8401

KESTREL PROBLEM

Many of our program presenters bring calls to action. Such was the case when Patty Reum spoke to the June chapter meeting. Patty, a wildlife biologist, has taken up the cause of the severely-threatened American Kestrel, our smallest but perhaps most colorful falcon. The alarm bell rings because species numbers have dropped by nearly 50% nationally over the last 30 years. Construction and forest fire control have impinged seriously upon the bird's grassland habitat. (Forest fire clears the ground for "succession" grasses).

Biodiversity has its own "periodic table," where every element has its place. The charming, ever-entertaining little Kestrel is no exception; and its relative absence has an unbalancing effect. The bird provides non-toxic, highly-efficient pest control as it predated on mice and insects. It requires an open field for its acute senses (an olfactory knack that allows it to detect rodent urine). Loss of farming with the ensuing reforestation has squeezed the kestrel out of much of New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Prone to perching on wires as it surveys its territory, the little falcon needs short, not deep, groundcover.

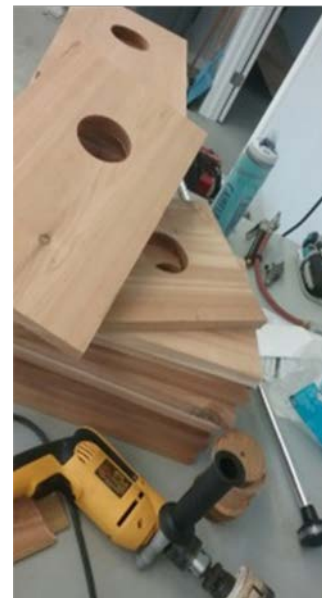
These birds are pure carnivores. Their anatomy and hunting mechanics suit their tastes to perfection. The Kestrel hovers with its finely-tuned, pointy wings until ready to "stoop" with talons outstretched before it. Returning, prey in claw, the parent bird expertly shreds the meat for its young.

Along with the Virginia Society of Ornithology, Patty Reum promotes the Kestrel Box Project. She has adapted for it the movie-born maxim: "If we build them, they will come," or, as she has said, she hopes they will come.

Nesting Box Project: [pareum@gmail.com](mailto:pareum@gmail.com)

KESTREL SOLUTION

Our Kestrel Box Project is coming along step by steps, with each step's being squeezed into summer activities. In June Beth Kendrick ordered the wood and drew the cutting lines on each piece. In July Sandy Dodge cut the wood. In August Melissa Gross cut the holes on the facing pieces.



...Photo: Melissa Gross

On September 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, we will begin assembling the boxes in Ron Davis's workshop on Dividing Creek near Kilmarnock. If you are handy with a drill and enjoy working with others, we can use your help on those dates.

E-mail Beth Kendrick:

[bethannkendrick@gmail.com](mailto:bethannkendrick@gmail.com)

She will add you to the list and send you final information about time and place. Those kestrels need our help, and Beth needs your help.

We hope to see you there.

Nancy Garvey

## AUDUBON ELSEWHERE

There is many a guide written about the curiosities and the surprises to be found along American roadsides. One such surprise popped up on the website of Canton, Massachusetts, a suburban Boston town to which our daughter has just moved. One of Canton's prime sites is Massachusetts Audubon's Museum of American Bird Art. As befits the natural world it purports to showcase, the museum sports no marble columns nor grand staircase. Rather it is housed in a half-timbered cottage, reminiscent of Stratford-upon-Avon, but settled instead into a very New World landscape.

Acreage of low-lying marsh, cultivated patches and forest stretch away to the building's rear. Through these wind paths designed for birders and the young campers for whom the Museum runs legions of programs.

On our visit there, we had anticipated galleries-full of varied artwork; but, in fact, the entire space was devoted to a single "artist-in-residence." Homogeneity, however, did not prove to be monotony.

Barry Van Dusen is the watercolorist vested with visiting, over a two-year span, all 56 Massachusetts Audubon sanctuaries. He has felt inspired by legendary naturalist painters like Thomas Cole and Martin Johnson Heade. As we wandered across the gleaming hardwood of the museum, happy to be in lakes of cool air after the ferocity of August sun, we were struck by the variety of New England's ecosystems, and by the artist's skill in capturing them.

Certain of the paintings grasp the vastness of a marsh or the granite strewn discomfort of what Van Dusen has titled "Rough Meadows." Others zero in on an individual bird, like his livingly present Yellow-Rumped Warbler at Lake Wampanoag.

## BIRD ART

These works seemed to be about the best blends of reality and painterliness that can be imagined. There is sufficient accuracy in color, attitude, foliage, cloud, water and shape that the viewer is absolute certain of what he is seeing. There is not too much of this however. Any potential tedium of photographic realism is avoided.

There is no doubt that water, pigment, paint and the eye of the artist are very present in every print or aquatint.

Barry Van Dusen posts a blog at:

[blogs/massaudubon.org/taking-flight](https://blogs/massaudubon.org/taking-flight)

Visiting this provides the freshness of the artist's field observations.

Letha Harris



...Photo: Caroline Kelley

Museum of American  
Bird Art, Canton  
Massachusetts

WILD WILDLIFE



One secure, one not so sure,  
in a beachside bluster...below, wild pea  
flourishes in a salt  
Atlantic breeze. ...Photos: Hugh Kelley

GARDEN WILDLIFE



...Photos: Paul Servis



**AUGUST 14TH BIRD WALK.....**

Eddie and Sandy Dodge were kind enough to host an early morning bird walk. They live near Flag Pond and Swan Lake. I got there early and was treated to the morning rush of hummingbirds, American goldfinches and house finches at their backyard feeders. The hummingbirds put on quite a show.

While we watched them, people started showing up. And more people showed up...and then more people showed up! Eddie said under her breath, "Gee, I hope I made enough food!"

Jeff Wright, the walk leader, and I were pretty surprised to see about 25 people arrive for this bird walk. There were young, old, beginners, veterans: a whole spectrum of birders. It was great. We walked about two miles through some woods, by a tidal riparian area, to the mouth of the Potomac River. We also covered some previously-logged areas that had had some time to grow back.



...Photo: Melissa Gross

**....AND WHAT WE SAW.**

There was a total of 37 species noted.

Highlights were the calls of the yellow-billed cuckoos, the black and white warbler perched on the Dodges' front steps, just as we returned, and the family of blue grosbeaks. The grosbeaks were sounding the alarm that people were around, and the fledglings were trying to find cover. One allowed me some time to try for a decent picture.



...Photo: Melissa Gross

Back at the Dodges', we were treated to a lovely feast of fresh fruit, fresh bread, grape salad, freshly-brewed teas, and good conversation and a review of all that we had discovered that morning.

I extend thanks to the Dodges for hosting the group as well as to every person who came out to join us.

I had a blast, and hope you did, too!

Melissa Gross

## BIRD LORE



*The Kestrel has carried, in the past, the evocative name of “Windhover,” inspiring this poem of the same name:*

**THE WINDHOVER**

*I caught this morning’s minion,  
kingdom of daylight’s dauphin,  
dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in  
his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him  
steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of  
a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on  
swing,  
As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a  
bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in  
hiding  
Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of,  
the mastery of the thing!*

*Brute beauty and valour and act, oh,  
air, pride, plume here  
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks  
from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous,  
O my chevalier!*

*Gerard Manley Hopkins  
Poet and Priest                      1844--1889*

## AUTUMN BIRD WALKS

Jeff Wright has submitted the following schedule, details for which will be firmed up on the web-site as each respective date approaches.

Monday, September 11<sup>th</sup>:

Annual Picnic @ Belle Isle State Park  
with our only scheduled  
EVENING bird walk to follow.

Monday, September 25<sup>th</sup>:

Tangier Island  
(Ferry departs from  
Northumberland County.  
Weekday proposed to  
avoid large crowds  
(Alternate proposed:  
Saturday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>,  
Reedville).

Monday, October 9<sup>th</sup>:

George Washington Birthplace  
Westmoreland County

Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>:

Hughlett Point  
Northumberland County

Monday, November 13<sup>th</sup>:

Essex County

Saturday, November 25<sup>th</sup>:

Lancaster County