

HICKORY FARMS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

June 2020 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG

P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

HFCA BOARD & VOLUNTEERS

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Vice President: *Kathie Schmidt*
Secretary: *Carlie Mensen*
ACC: *Pam Barrett*
Treasurer: *Jim Bever*
Assistant Treasurer: *Ken Sorg*
Common Areas: *Melissa Stark*
Webmaster: *Bryan Crabtree*
Neighborhood Watch: *Debbi Buchanan*
Newsletter Editor: *Bill Berg*
At Large: *Telah Jackson, Kirk Randall*
Social Committee: *Meredith Perkins, Lauren Crabtree, Krissy Lunsford, Sarah Tropiano, Angela Turner*
Architectural Reviews: *Pam Barrett, Debbi Buchanan, Keith Ferguson Donna Garfield, Ed Kiechlin, Kirk Randall, Josef Gasimov*
Newsletter Delivery: *John Kitzmiller, Heather Webb, Dante Gilmer, Sondra Arnold, Ed Kiechlin, Claire and Sean Coleman, Debbi Buchanan*

IN THIS EDITION

Covid-19 Impacts	2
Selling your Home	3
Reserve Study	3
Parking in HFCA	4
New Board Member	4
Fairfax Trails	4
Strategic Plan	5
LISTSERV	5
Join a Board Meeting	6
Dumping in Common Areas	6
Property Boarding Common Areas	6
Volunteer Event	7
Contact the Board	7
Robot Deliveries	8
Pressure Washing	9
Student Yellow Pages	10
HFCA Property Evaluation Checklist	11
Birds of Hickory Farms	13
Flag Day	14

COVID-19 IMPACTS WITHIN HICKORY FARMS

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of activities within our Hickory Farms Community have been impacted! In an abundance of caution and to avoid risks of virus transmission to our many active volunteers, the following actions have been taken:

- **Board of Directors Meetings:** The Board of Directors have rescheduled face to face meetings and are now meeting monthly using audio/video conference calling. This allows the Board to continue their many responsibilities while maintaining social distancing and government requirements to avoid any meetings of more than 10 people. Major topics coming up on the Board meeting schedule include: June - Strategic Planning and Reserve Study, July - Common Areas Planning, August - Inputs for 2021 Annual Operating Budget.
- **Neighborhood Watch:** The regularly scheduled Neighborhood Watch tours on Friday and Saturday evening each week have been placed on hiatus until further notice. Risks of contracting the virus from handling the NW bag, binder, note sheets and flash light have been eliminated. Our Neighborhood Watch has provided weekend coverage within our community for many years. Thanks to all our NW volunteers who patrol our community to report suspicious activities and keep our neighborhood a safe place to live. Everyone is encouraged to be a "neighborhood watcher" from their own residence. If you see something, say something!
- **Common Area Volunteers:** A number of our group volunteer activities supporting our 20+ acres of common areas were temporarily placed on hold, due to COVID - 19. Our group volunteer activities will be reopening gradually throughout the year, based on the VA Governor's orders. This way those neighbors who wish to participate, can assist in maintaining our beautiful common areas.
- **What individual Hickory Farms residents can do:** Each of us have a role to play! If you have virus symptoms, self-isolate from family, friends and neighbors and contact your healthcare provider. Keep your family safe by following CDC guidelines and government directives regarding social distancing and wearing face masks when outside your home. Reach out to your neighbors, especially senior members of our community, to check on them and if they need any assistance. The smallest act, delivering a prepared meal or groceries, cutting the grass for a shut-in neighbor, walking a neighbor's pet, could mean a great deal and strengthen neighborhood friendships for years to come.



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HICKORY FARMS DRAFTS FIRST RESERVE STUDY

As required by Virginia Property Owner Association Act (VPOAA) and guided by our own Deed of Dedication and Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) document, the Board created a Reserve Study Committee to draft a Reserve Study for Hickory Farms. A reserve study is an analysis of improvements owned by the Association, estimating remaining useful life, estimating current repair or replacement cost and developing an annual contribution amount to be added to the Reserve Fund each year to cover the cost of repair/replacement when required. First step, the committee inventoried all components owned by the Association. With over 20 acres of common area, our Association is responsible for asphalt paths, concrete walkways and steps, masonry entrance signs, drainage pipes and numerous custom signs in those areas. An inventory was completed and divided between Capital components (costing over \$500 and expected life over 1 year) and Expense components (costing less than \$500 or expected life 1 year or less). Expense components are addressed each year in the Annual Operating Budget. Next step involved determining remaining useful life and current replacement cost for each Capital component. Additionally, current replacement cost was adjusted for inflation over the next 20 years. Following that review, the Board is targeting to approve the Reserve Study by August, publish the results in the September newsletter, and distribute the both study document itself and summary of results to the Members via the Listserv email group for online discussion. It is standard practice for the Board of Directors to present the annual budget and Annual Assessment to the Members for their affirmation at the October Annual Meeting. And, since the results of the Reserve Study, like the budget, could impact Association expenses and Annual Assessments in the coming years, the Board of Directors will, accordingly, submit the results of the Reserve Study to the Members for their affirmation at the forthcoming Annual Meeting.

SELLING YOUR HOME?

Homeowners, when you sell your home in Hickory Farms, you are required by Virginia law to give to the purchaser the Hickory Farms Community Association's (Association) Virginia Property Owners' Association Act (VPOAA) Disclosure Packet.

Under Section 3.1(d) of the Association's Rules and Regulations, homeowners will be assessed a \$146.71 fee for the preparation and delivery of a Disclosure Packet. This fee complies with Common Interest Community Board regulations under the VPOAA.

You or your agent should contact both the Treasurer and Architectural Control Committee (ACC) chairperson using the email vpoaa@hickoryfarms.org to request a Disclosure Packet. You should submit your request at least four weeks prior to closing in order to give our volunteer Board members adequate time to respond. Regardless of whom requests the Disclosure Packet, you the homeowner are legally responsible under VPOAA to ensure it gets delivered to the purchaser in a timely manner.

The purchaser may cancel the contract for any reason within three days of receiving the Disclosure Packet.

The Hickory Farms Disclosure Packet comes in two parts:

Part 1 contains specific information about your property. Before Part 1 is emailed to you by the Treasurer, your property exterior will be inspected by a member of Architectural Control Committee (ACC) to determine compliance with the Hickory Farms [Rules and Regulations](#) and [Restrictive Covenants](#) (See Article VII). If it is not in compliance, the Part 1 letter will direct you to bring the property into compliance before closing. If you refuse to comply, the purchaser could cancel the sale. A member of the ACC may arrive unannounced to see if someone is home before inspecting the property. If no one is at home, they will do a quick walk around the property. If you do not want the person to enter your yard unattended, (if, say, you have a dog), you must arrange a meeting time.

Part 2 contains general information applicable to all homes in Hickory Farms. This document is available for free download by [clicking here](#).

When you receive the Disclosure Packet, you or your real estate agent should immediately forward a copy to 1) the purchaser and 2) your settlement agent.

WATCH WHERE YOU PARK

A few of our streets have become clogged with vehicles owned by residents as well as their visitors. Some cars have even blocked the driveways of neighbors. In Fairfax County it is illegal to: park within 1) 10 feet of a driveway, 2) 15 feet of a fire hydrant, 3) 30 feet of a stop sign, or 4) 20 feet of an intersection. It is illegal to park on a sidewalk. Disabled vehicles (eg, flat tires) and vehicles with expired registrations must be repaired/registered or moved off of public property into the owner's private property carport or driveway. If you have a problem with illegal parking, first speak with the resident and, if the problem persists, call Fairfax County Police non-emergency at 703-691-2131. If you are blocked from exiting your driveway or a fire hydrant is blocked, call 911. To learn more about Fairfax County parking restrictions, please see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/parking/parking-restrictions-and-related-issues

WELCOME NEW ADDITION TO OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At May's meeting of the Board of Directors (using teleconferencing), Carlie Mensen was elected as Secretary, a Board member position. The Secretary position had been vacant for several months during which Debbi Buchanan and Telah Jackson served in a temporary capacity. Thank you, Debbi and Telah for all your help! Carlie and Justin moved into Spinning Wheel Court just about a year ago. Welcome aboard, Carlie!

TIRED OF WALKING/JOGGING IN CIRCLES AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

The City of Fairfax has an excellent system of hiking and biking trails which you can see on the attached map. One particularly nice hike is from the Coyote Grill on Main Street, along Old Lee Highway, and through Daniels Run Park. Nearby Ashby Pond has a small hiking trail, a nice grassy area, and a couple of picnic tables. You can view the full color version of the map at <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/government/parks-recreation/parks-and-trails/maps>





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HICKORY FARMS STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision Statement

Continue to be a community that offers an inspiring lifestyle, a good quality of life and a safe environment. A community that maintains its desirability as a place in which to live and enjoy the benefits of family, friends and community.

Mission

To enhance and preserve the community's quality of life and sense of community through effective and efficient management of the Association through the compliance of the rules and covenants. To maintain and improve property values, support initiatives and capital improvements that benefits the greater good of the community. To restore and preserve the wildlife habitats in our common areas.

Core Values

- Community participation
- Respect for our Governing documents
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Fairness
- Sense of community

Our Greatest Community Assets

- 20+ Acres of Common Areas
- 11 Acres of which is Resource Protected
- Walking Trails
- Open Mowed Fields
- Forested Areas
- Creek and Wildlife Habitats
- 45% of Properties back up to common areas

Community activities and events

- Near shopping and restaurants
- Fairfax Swimming pool, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute & Green Acres Center within walking distance
- Woodson pyramid school district
- Convenient to Metro, Virginia Railway Express (VRE), the Beltway, Fairfax County Parkway, Fairfax City, Dulles and Reagan National Airports and Washington, DC
- Close proximity to George Mason University

Questions? Email strategicplan@hickoryfarms.org

JOIN OUR LISTSERV

There's no better way to stay in touch than through our Hickory Farms email listserv. Visit hickoryfarms.org and click "Hickory Farms Listserv" on left and follow the instructions.

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INTERSTED IN JOINING A BOARD MEETING?

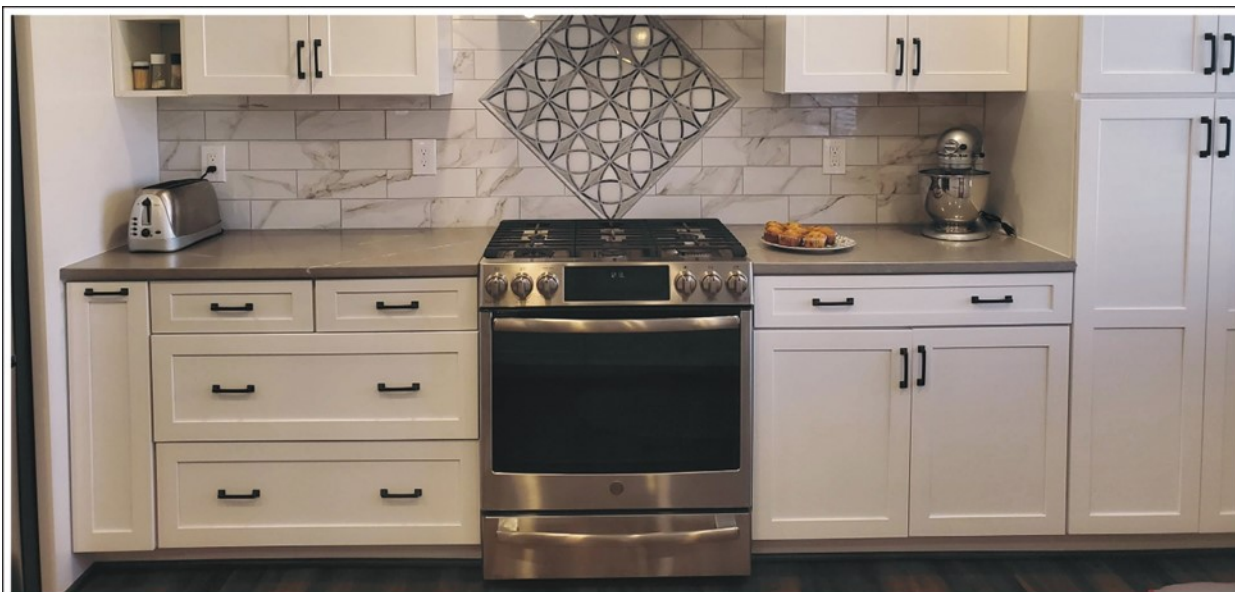
Due to the pandemic and social distancing, HFCA Board meetings are on Zoom. Please contact a HFCA Board member for more information.

DUMPING ON COMMON AREAS

The Common Areas are part of everyone's back yard. However, in several areas, yard debris such as grass clippings and branches are being dumped. PLEASE do not dump debris in the common areas. Besides being unsightly, these dumping areas draw rodents and other wild animals into our neighborhood. Your trash service will pick up yard debris separately for recycling on Wednesdays from spring through fall. It will even pick up debris as part of your trash service during the winter. If you have been putting debris in the common areas, please move it out to the street on debris day or haul it to the Fairfax County dump on West Ox Road. Although the common areas may be wooded, the woods can't decompose more debris than it generates itself. In other words, the clippings and branches you dump in the common areas overload the area's ability to decompose the material.

DOES YOUR YARD BORDER A COMMONS AREA OR ENTRANCE?

In order to avoid the risk of damage to resident owned fences, gates, trees, plants, hardscapes and built structures, the HFCA landscaping contractor(s) will target trimming within one foot of Common Areas property lines with resident lot lines. Residents are responsible for keeping their own lot and structures landscaped, including both sides of fences, gates, trees and any structures located near or on the adjoining property lines. By working together, our HFCA community landscaper(s) and individual lot owners can successfully keep all property within Hickory Farms attractively landscaped and maintained while minimizing any risks of damages to existing landscaping features.



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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MULCHING THE UPPER COMMONS MEADOW ON 6.6.20

The Commons Area Committee will be holding a volunteer mulch moving event on Saturday, June 6th from 8 AM – 12 PM at the Upper Commons entrance off of Farm House Lane. We will need volunteers to assist us in raking and hand spreading mulch into place, wheelbarrowing the mulch from Farm House Lane to the Upper Commons Meadow section and shoveling mulch into wheelbarrow/pick up truck.

To sign up for this event, please click on the link below and fill in your name during the designated time slot.
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B0949AAAB2BA6FF2-mulching>

Please note: We recommend volunteers wear a mask or bandana over their nose and mouth. This will prevent you from inhaling any mulch dust that tends to be kicked up.
A rest, water, Gatorade and snack station will be set up so volunteers can rehydrate and refuel, if needed.
Please contact Melissa Stark at commonareas@hickoryfarms.org with any questions.

WANT TO CONTACT THE BOARD?

Board of Directors: hfca@hickoryfarms.org

Architectural Control Committee: acc@hickoryfarms.org

President: president@hickoryfarms.org

Treasurer: treasurer@hickoryfarms.org

Common Areas: commonareas@hickoryfarms.org

Webmaster: webmaster@hickoryfarms.org

Social Committee: social@hickoryfarms.org



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ROBOT SPOTTED IN HICKORY FARMS

Robots may soon deliver restaurant food and groceries from Fairfax City merchants to Hickory Farms homes. This robot was spotted on Still Meadow Road on May 26th, presumably mapping out the neighborhood for future deliveries. Fairfax City has partnered with Starship Technologies (www.starship-fairfaxcity.com) to allow restaurants and stores to use the company's sidewalk robots for deliveries in a one-square-mile area of the city during the coronavirus crisis. Starship's fleet of 20 autonomous on-demand robots will deliver daily from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. The delivery fee will be only \$2.99 since Fairfax City Economic Development Authority has provided a \$10,000 grant to get the service started. The service will continue through the coronavirus crisis, and the city will evaluate whether to continue the program after emergency declarations are lifted. Residents can download the Starship-Food delivery app on their Android or Apple device, confirm their address is in the delivery zone, and choose from the list of participating businesses which include, among others, Havabite Eatery, Coyote Grille, Hamrock's Restaurant, The Wine House, High Side, and Essential Groceries, with more to come. In the April roll-out, the delivery area ended at Roberts Road, but this robot sighting may mean they that deliveries could soon include Hickory Farms. In early 2019, George Mason University became the first university in the country to launch food and beverage delivery using a fleet of the autonomous robots from Starship. After each delivery, the robots get wiped down to avoid spreading the coronavirus. After placing an order using the Starship Delivery app, delivery time will range between 15 and 45 minutes in Fairfax City.

Each robot can carry up to 20 pounds, the equivalent of about three shopping bags of goods. If groceries cannot fit inside one robot, two robots will be sent to carry entire order. The robots are outfitted with multiple cameras, two-way audio to communicate with people they interact with, and can navigate hurdles like curbs. They are monitored by humans who can take control at any time. Customers can follow the robot's progress on a map. Once the robot arrives, the customer receives an alert, and can then meet and unlock it through the app.





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GROUP PURCHASE FOR PRESSURE WASHING HOUSE SIDING

Given all the rain we have had since last summer, the vinyl siding of many of our homes has become covered with mold and algae stains. Hickory Farms residents have used Rob Banks at Northern Virginia Pressure Washing Service since 2011, and he is again offering special pricing this Spring.

Rob and his crew can pressure wash most homes in our community for less than half the going cost. And, while they are at it, they can clean your deck, driveway, or sidewalk, many of which have turned gray or black because of the recent proliferation of mold and algae.

Rob has developed three tier pricing based upon the amount of siding on your home: small = \$180, medium = \$195, and large = \$210.

Here are a few tips: Ask the crew to keep the high pressure water stream away from double pane windows and doors. The water pressure can break the seal between the glass panes and, after a few months, they may fog up. Take special care when cleaning concrete. Too much water pressure can tear up the surface of the concrete, leading to premature failure. It is generally OK to clean decks constructed of pressure treated wood. However, it is not recommended to pressure wash deck components made of Trex or similar composite materials. If in doubt, check with Rob.

Some folks still have the original aluminum siding, which has become oxidized and worn over the years. I know from personal experience that one too many pressure washings can wear the paint down to shiny bare metal. Our aluminum siding is 45 years old; consider replacing it with another material (vinyl or Hardie Board) or, after pressure washing, paint the metal, as was done at 10008 Cotton Farm and 4313 Farm House. NVA Pressure Washing generally does not do aluminum siding more than forty years old.

When you contact Rob, please tell him that you are with Hickory Farms and that "Kirk sent me." Call 202-330-9922 or email him robmelisab@verizon.net.

STUDENT YELLOW PAGES

If you offer services such as raking leaves, lawn mowing, babysitting, general home maintenance, dog walking, tutoring, etc., please email kirk_randall@hotmail.com to be included.

Bridgette Buchanan (16)	703-307-7323	Babysitting and dog sitting
Britney Mulliner (17)	571-474-7277	Babysitting and dog sitting
Cody Dempster (17)	703-776-0101	Yard work, snow shoveling, housework
Dominic Cannata (17)	703-568-9896	Lawn mowing, shovel snow, cleaning, mulching
Dylan Mehrman (17)	478-230-5066	Lawn mowing
Erika Maaseide (17)	703-659-5321	Babysitting; Special Needs experienced
Kent Coddling (18)	703-317-7319	Shovel snow, yard work, leaf raking
Paul Cannata (18)	786-445-5318	Lawn mowing, shovel snow, cleaning, mulching
Xavier Gilmer (15)	703-862-2192	Shovel snow; lawn mowing
Jaden Singh (17)	703-278-8800	Math tutoring, snow shoveling
George Coddling (14)	703-223-4101	Snow shovel, yard work, leaf raking

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HICKORY FARMS 2020 ANNUAL PROPERTY INSPECTION

To avoid COVID-19 issues and possible risk to our many valued volunteers, the 2020 Hickory Farms annual property inspection will be conducted using a do-it-yourself (DIY) approach. The checklist included in this newsletter is the same checklist used by the Architecture Control Committee (ACC) to visually inspect the exterior of all 198 individual lots in our community each year. Please take a few minutes to inspect the outside of your property to identify those areas that need some attention. The regular annual property inspection, led by ACC, will be back in 2021.

HICKORY FARMS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PROPERTY EVALUATION CHECKLIST

PROPERTY INFORMATION					
PROPERTY ADDRESS:					
RESIDENCE EVALUATION (RC #4; R&R 1.4)					
COMPONENT	NOTED DEFICIENCIES/VIOLATIONS				SEVERITY ¹
SIDING	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Faded	<input type="checkbox"/> Peeling paint	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained			
SOFFITS	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing/damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
RAKE BOARDS/ FASCIA	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing/damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
GUTTERS/ DOWNSPOUTS	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged/disfigured	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing components	<input type="checkbox"/> Uncleaned (pine needles, leaves, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
SHUTTERS	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing/detached	<input type="checkbox"/> Faded color/peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
WINDOWS/TRIM	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Broken glass	<input type="checkbox"/> Faded/peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
ENTRY DOORS/TRIM	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Faded color/peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained		
LOUVERS/GRILLS	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing/damaged gable vents	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing/damaged, other vent types	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained		
ROOF	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing shingles	<input type="checkbox"/> Buckled/damaged shingles	<input type="checkbox"/> Mismatched shingle colors	<input type="checkbox"/> Extensive algae stains	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Lichen growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetation debris (e.g., pine needles, limbs)			
CARPORT	<input type="checkbox"/> Cluttered/excessive storage		<input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorized enclosure (note for ACC validation)		
GARAGE DOOR	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged/broken	<input type="checkbox"/> Faded color/peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
CHIMNEY	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged/broken bricks	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing mortar	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
BRICK FAÇADE	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged/broken bricks	<input type="checkbox"/> Missing mortar	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
EXPOSED FOUNDATION	<input type="checkbox"/> Cracked/damaged	<input type="checkbox"/> Peeling paint	<input type="checkbox"/> Algae/mold growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained	
NOTES/COMMENTS/OTHER NOTED VIOLATIONS:					

HICKORY FARMS COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION PROPERTY EVALUATION CHECKLIST

YARD EVALUATION					
COMPONENT/ITEM	NOTED DEFICIENCIES/VIOLATIONS				SEVERITY [†]
FENCE (RC #3; R&R 1.3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged Components	<input type="checkbox"/> Sagging, warped or buckling	<input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorized materials*	<input type="checkbox"/> Located forward of house	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty/stained				
GATES (RC #3; R&R 1.3)	<input type="checkbox"/> Damaged Components	<input type="checkbox"/> Sagging or unsupported	<input type="checkbox"/> Compatible with fence material		
LAWN (RC #4; R&R 1.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Excessive grass growth	<input type="checkbox"/> Leaves/needles not removed	<input type="checkbox"/> Fallen limbs/sticks not removed		
SHRUBS/TREES (RC #4; R&R 1.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Untrimmed/Unmaintained	<input type="checkbox"/> Obstructing sidewalk	<input type="checkbox"/> Dead or large portions dead	<input type="checkbox"/> Tree stumps not removed or cut flush	
FLOWER BEDS (RC #4; R&R 1.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unmaintained	<input type="checkbox"/> Weeds/overgrowth			
DRIVEWAYS, SIDEWALKS & CURBS (RC #4; R&R 1.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unedged/unmaintained	<input type="checkbox"/> Weed growth around mail boxes or road signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Debris collecting along curbs (e.g., leaves, pine needles, limbs or trash)	<input type="checkbox"/> Driveway concrete cracked, broken or spalling	
NOTES/COMMENTS/OTHER NOTED VIOLATIONS:					
OTHER EVALUATION ITEMS					
ITEM	NOTED DEFICIENCIES/VIOLATIONS				
SATELLITE DISH	<input type="checkbox"/> Not located on roof**				
TRASH/RUBBISH/DEBRIS (RC #13, R&R 1.13)	<input type="checkbox"/> Trash/rubbish collected/stored on lot (not in a sanitary container) <input type="checkbox"/> Large piles of yard debris kept on lot				
TRASH/RECYCLE RECEPTACLES (R&R 1.13)	<input type="checkbox"/> Stored in front of house				
VEHICLE PARKING (RC #11; R&R 1.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat, trailer, RV parked in front of residence >7 days <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles parked on lawn				
UNAUTHORIZED STRUCTURES (RC #1,2,8 & 10)	<input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorized structures or locations (e.g., trash receptacle enclosures, garden furniture or gazebo forward of residence)** <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary structure in front of residence >7 days				
NOTES/COMMENTS/OTHER NOTED VIOLATIONS:					
EVALUATION/EVALUATOR INFORMATION					
DATE OF EVALUATION:					
EVALUATOR NAME:			SIGNATURE:		

[†]NOTE SEVERITY OF VIOLATION/CONDITION: H: HIGH, M: MODERATE OR L: LOW

*MATERIALS MUST BE WOOD, BRICK OR OTHER HIGH QUALITY SPECIALTY MATERIALS (E.G., VINYL OR PVC) THAT RESEMBLE WOOD OR BRICK

**OTHER LOCATIONS OR STRUCTURE INSTALLATIONS TO BE VALIDATED BY HICKORY FARMS ARCHITECTURAL CONTROL COMMITTEE (ACC); NOTE LOCATION/STRUCTURE ON FORM

RC: HICKORY FARMS DEED OF DEDICATION & DECLARATION OF COVENANTS, CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS, ARTICLE VII *RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS*

R&R: HICKORY FARMS RULES & REGULATIONS (EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 2013)

BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

-By Bob Cosgriff

Despite the cool, wet, and windy weather in late April and the first week of May, the birds did come. This is always the most exciting time of year for birders, and I hope this article will convey some of the excitement we experienced in what was the best spring migration ever in terms of the number of species seen.

Perhaps the best way to start is to list three yard “first records,” then highlight some second records and finish with other notable sightings:

- **Nashville Warbler** (May 7)—this is also a first neighborhood record, moving our Hickory Farms count to 123 species!
- **Hooded Warbler** (May 20)—this “most wanted” bird was also a first neighborhood record, bringing us up to 124 species!
- Although any first yard record is a great thing, and three in one year is almost unprecedented, perhaps our most exciting sighting was that of an **Ovenbird** (a type of warbler) on May 10. The only previous sighting in our yard was May 11, 2002, a gap of 18 years less one day! (There are two other Hickory Farms records, both along the creek, so it is fair to say that this bird has been rare here over two decades.) Even better than seeing it once was the chance to see it several times as it stayed in our yard for four consecutive days!
- Indigo Bunting (May 8)—this is the second Hickory Farms record of this beautiful bird
- We had another good second-ever yard sighting: **Blue-headed Vireo** (May 4th). We also had two male **Baltimore Orioles** show up, only the second time in eight years we have seen this beautiful species in our yard.
- We saw a **Scarlet Tanager** on May 14. This is only the third sighting of this beautiful bird seen in our yard since 2013. Like other neo-tropical migrants, tanagers are suffering population losses due to various causes discussed later in this article.
- On May 22, we saw a female **Canada Warbler**, only the third yard record (others were a fall sighting on 9/17/12 and last year, 5/18/19)
- We heard, then saw, the first **Wood Thrush** in several years in Hickory Farms. This species has suffered a severe decline over the last two decades due primarily to habitat destruction here in the U.S. and in its South American wintering grounds. Its beautiful flute-like songs used to be heard regularly in the summer here. This was not a one-time sighting, as this bird returned on two more occasions.
- We saw a total of 15 warbler species in our yard, which sets a new one-year record. These small, beautiful birds are the highlight of the spring migration in the eastern U.S. Small and active, they can be frustratingly hard to spot, always seeming to be behind some leaves or a branch. Some were seen only once, briefly, but several stayed around our yard for three or four days before moving on to their northern breeding grounds.
- Our “big day” was May 5th, when we tallied six warbler species, a **Red-eyed Vireo** and the **Baltimore Orioles**, several within a short 15-minute period in the morning.
- On our “big day” we also saw two uncommon visitors in the tree island behind Melissa and Jarrett Stark’s house, namely, **Swainson’s Thrush** and **Veery** (a species of thrush). The clearing of invasive vegetation in that area has created an ideal thrush habitat for a migration stop-over: a shady area dominated by large trees with open spacing, a small amount of understory vegetation, and leaf litter on the ground, along with some fallen limbs and branches. The larger tree islands in the lower common grounds and the wooded area in the Rabbit Run Resource Protection Area have these same characteristics as well. An additional bonus was seeing a Veery in our yard on 5/16 and 5/17, only the 4th yard sighting (others were in 2009, 2016, and 2017).
- At press time, we recorded 68 different species of birds in or over our yard, which is a new record number by May 31, topping the previous yard record (2019) of 65 species and also eclipsing our one-year record of 67 (also in 2019, when we picked up two additional birds later in the year).
- There were some birds we usually see during migration that were conspicuous by their absence. The most likely explanation is the unusual weather patterns. While we missed seeing these visitors, our first - and second-record sightings, the numerous warblers, the three neo-tropical “jewels” of the migration

(Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Scarlet Tanager) and the return of the Ovenbird and Wood Thrush more than made up for their absence.

I encourage you to look at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology “All About Birds” website at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/search> to see excellent pictures of the birds mentioned above, as well as previous and future articles.

As for the bluebird trail, we lost a second clutch of four eggs due to a House Sparrow that killed the brooding female in the box. We have continued to clear out several sparrow nests each week. On May 16, we found a complete bluebird nest with five eggs in the lower common grounds. Provided there is no predation or disturbance, these eggs should hatch between 29 May and 1 June.

I mentioned habitat destruction as one significant factor in declining bird populations. Other factors include collisions with buildings or wind turbines, and widespread application of pesticides and herbicides that kill not only insects and plant sources that birds rely on, but also are directly toxic to birds. But the number one cause of bird deaths might surprise you—cats! Numerous studies bear out this fact. Both domestic and feral cats are included and together it is calculated that they kill nearly one billion wild birds a year. The best solution: domestic cats should be ‘house’ cats and kept inside. It is healthier and safer for cats to avoid the great outdoors, where many dangers abound—other cats, foxes, coyotes, ticks, cars. Contrary to conventional wisdom, cats do not need to roam. All they need is a territory of their own and this territory can be indoors. Also, feral cat populations should not be encouraged by providing food.

Numerous conservation groups are working at the federal, state, and local levels on reducing or eliminating all these threats to birds. Some progress is being made, but the sad truth is that many birds that were once commonplace, such as the Wood Thrush, are in sharp decline. It will take concerted effort by many organizations, political will, cooperation from the industrial and agricultural sectors, and both money and time to reverse this disturbing trend. Individuals can help by using only non-toxic organic fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides in their yards; creating habitat that provides the three essentials of food, water, and cover; and keeping pet cats inside.

Multiplied by many yards and neighborhoods across the country this can make a big difference in bringing back bird populations to previous levels.

With the approach of summer, the wildflower meadow and other areas of our common grounds will begin to bloom with beautiful flowers. These will attract butterflies and hummingbirds. I encourage you to get out for some healthful exercise and enjoy these neighborhood amenities. It provides a nice antidote to the current coronavirus restrictions. As you walk around the neighborhood (at a safe social distance, of course!), keep your eyes and ears open for the many beautiful birds of Hickory Farms. Stay well!

FLAG DAY

Flag Day is celebrated on June 14. It commemorates the adoption of the flag of the United States on June 14, 1777 by resolution of the Second Continental Congress. The United States Army also celebrates the U.S. Army birthday on this date.

If you choose to fly your flag, it should not be tattered, dirty, faded, or ripped. If you hang your flag, the union (the blue area with the stars) should be at the top left as you view it.

You can read more on flag etiquette at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/4/chapter-1>