

HICKORY FARMS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

April 2022 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG

P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Sean Coleman

Spring is certainly in full bloom, the tulips are up, the daffodils are gone, and the forsythia is already turning into their summer green. The mowing of the Common Areas has already started. The Common Areas Committee deserves a big thanks for walking the Common Areas and picking up large branches and twigs that have fallen over the winter. Also, Bob Cosgriff will once again host a children's bird hike on April 30th; see his note further inside this newsletter.

I want to thank everyone for the payment of their annual dues. Without these funds, the neighborhood could not function. One of these functions we are hoping to bring back is the weekend neighborhood watch. Christina Crockett has volunteered to be the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator for us. As mentioned last month, we have recently had at least one car ransacked here in Hickory Farms.

At the Board's last meeting we decided to conduct a review of the processes and procedures of the neighborhood Architectural Control Committee (ACC), which continues to serve all of us with very dedicated work to assure compliance with the covenants to which all homeowners agreed when they bought here. This is a follow-up to the request made at the last Annual Meeting in October for a review. It is also in line with the efforts of the Board for the past year to review and improve different aspects of our HFCA organization such as financial management, branding, and communication. If you are interested in serving on this review or talking with the review team about your experience with the ACC, please contact Jim Bever.

We mentioned last Fall that Hickory Farms had been selected by the Fairfax County Tree Commission as the winner of the prestigious annual Friends of Trees award. The award will be presented at the April meeting of the Commission on April 21st at 7 pm. Melissa Stark, our Common Area Committee leader, Bob Cosgriff, who helped write the submission, Jim Bever and I will attend to represent Hickory Farms. If others wish to attend we will publish the link to the meeting on the listserv.

The community yard sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 21st from 7 am-Noon. Pete Scala is once again overseeing this for us. This is a great opportunity to clean out some previously used items.

Jim Bever and the Lower Commons path working group are moving forward to finalize options for the Board to consider on how to improve the path safety and control the water flow at the base of the Lower Commons area. As those of you who utilize the path know, the asphalt pathway has become highly rutted and there is often standing water there after a snowstorm or heavy rain. Read more about what the committee is doing in Jim's article inside this newsletter.

Upcoming area shredding events include these sponsored by Marian Homes: April 9th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm @ [St. Mary of Sorrows Church in Fairfax](#) and April 30th from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm @ [The Church of the Holy Spirit in Annandale](#). Fairfax County will also host a shred event on April 30th at the Mason District Government Center at 6507 Columbia Pike in Annandale. The County will accept up to four boxes of material for shredding on-site as you watch. They will return any boxes to you. The time is not currently listed on the County website but it is normally 8 am-Noon. Double-check for yourself. The website is: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/recycling-trash/document-shredding>. The County has nine shred events scheduled between April and October.

This will be my last column as your President. My wife Claire and I are selling our house and moving out of the neighborhood. It has been a real pleasure for both of us to have lived here for over 26 years. We will miss Hickory Farms, but new ventures are calling. Jim Bever, our Vice President, has been selected by the Board to assume the Presidency effective May 1. Please give him your support. I also want to thank the current Board members and all of our Volunteers for their tireless efforts to improve the neighborhood. Without their unrecompensed work, our neighborhood would be a lot different.

REMINDER! COMMUNITY YARD SALE IN MAY

Wow, it's April already!! And, frankly, it might be a little early to sign up for the HFCA Community Yard Sale we're holding on Saturday, May 21st. But it's not too early to start planning!

Spring cleaning time is here, so as you go through the house, look for stuff that you could sell (that maybe you would have just thrown out?) . . .

Some details about the Yard Sale:

Pete Scala will run it, and we plan to hold it on May 21st, with a rain date of May 22nd. We run it on a Saturday (or Sunday if we get rained out on Saturday) from 8 am to noon.

As in past years, HFCA does the advertising, posts signs, and distributes maps showing yard sale locations (but not names). Because we usually have many families participating, we always get a much better customer turnout than single family or 2 or 3 family yard sales.

The way it works is: that Saturday morning you put out your items for sale in your front yard, and shoppers use the map we provide to go to participating houses.

In order to cover costs, a nominal charge is required for people participating.

When you decide to sign up, call or email Pete Scala [(703) 764-0730 or scalapr@verizon.net].

Hints for preparing for a yard sale will be provided in the May newsletter.

SECOND ANNUAL HICKORY FARMS GARDEN TOUR

In addition to our award-winning common areas with its wildflower meadows, boxwood grove, and tree islands, Hickory Farms has many properties with very attractive gardens and landscaping designs. The purpose of the Hickory Farms Garden Tour is two-fold:

- ◆ As a community activity, it is a great way for residents to meet and talk to neighbors they might not know, thus fostering a stronger sense of community
- ◆ It will provide residents with ideas for their own yards by seeing what is possible in terms of gardens and landscaping

The first tour in 2021 was very successful, so we are going to do it again. Many of the same gardens from 2021 will be on display, but we are adding some new gardens this year.

The date is **Saturday, June 25th, 1 p.m.-4 p.m.** The rain date is **Sunday, June 26th, same time.** Flowers should be at or near their peak.

Please check the HFCA Listserv and future issues of the newsletter for updates.



BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By Bob Cosgriff

As this article appears, astronomical spring is officially here. All around, you can see trees beginning to leaf out and flowers bloom. It's warmer, sunnier, and—if you go outdoors and listen—much noisier, with birdsong filling the air. April is this start of the spring migration, a truly amazing event, as millions of birds that wintered in Central and South America and the Caribbean begin their annual flight to breeding grounds in the United States and Canada, some going as far as the Arctic Circle. For birders, this is the very best time of year.

To help celebrate this annual event, the Social Committee has scheduled two bird walks. The first is for kids (6th graders or younger) and their parent(s) and will be on Saturday, 30 April. We will begin at the corner of Farm House Road and Cotton Farm Road at 10 a.m. and spend approximately 1-1/2 hours talking about birds as we explore Rabbit Run and the two common areas. I would encourage the kids to bring a notebook. Binoculars are generally difficult for kids under 9 or 10 to use, but if your child has binoculars, they should bring them to get some practice. They will be able to see most birds with their naked eyes and I will have field guides to show pictures of what we see. We will do a bird "scavenger hunt" as we go around the commons. I will provide a checklist so that they can mark off all the species observed. Along the way, I'll talk about various aspects of birds' lives and how to identify them. We will observe a bluebird nest box.

The second walk is for adults and kids of middle school age and above. The date is Saturday, 7 May. We will meet at the same place as the kids' walk but will start at 9 a.m. This date is basically the peak weekend of the spring migration. I will discuss bird identification techniques and will provide a checklist. Bring binoculars, a field guide, a small notebook, and curiosity!

So to recap:

Kids' Bird Walk, Saturday, 30 April, 10-11:30 a.m. Meet at the library box on the corner of Farm House Road and Cotton Farm Road

Adult Bird Walk, Saturday, 7 May, 9-11 a.m. Meet at the library box on the corner of Farm House Road and Cotton Farm Road

Rain dates are Sunday, 1 May, and Sunday 8 May, respectively. Same times and locations.

We have tallied 43 species through March. Bird #43 was a beautiful Brown Thrasher. This number ties our highest-ever March total reached last year. One of the birds was quite special. On 22 March, I saw from my front yard a small- to medium-sized raptor fly out of the woods just uphill from the creek and into the woods on the north side of Cotton Farm Road. It did not appear to be a Red-shouldered Hawk or a Cooper's Hawk based on wing shape and flight profile. I was able to get my binoculars from the house and search for it. Luckily, I saw it fly from its perch along the creek to another branch where I could see it clearly. Based on several field marks, I concluded it was a Merlin, an uncommon small falcon. This is the third record for Hickory Farms, the other two being in February and December of 2011, both in our yard! Another top bird was Barred Owl, heard, but not seen, and close enough to count.

April will see a few new arrivals and then by the end of the month, the flood gates will open. We were fortunate to have such attractive birds as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Towhee, and Brown Creeper visit our yard repeatedly during March. We had three "grand slams" of woodpeckers (five of the possible six species). Our daily average jumped to 22 species as of the submission of this article.

Based on a suggestion from Melissa Stark, I will add a new feature to accompany this article, namely, a "Bird of the Month." To kick things off, I have selected Eastern Bluebird (*Sialia sialis*), which is appropriate since Hickory Farms has been home to a bluebird trail for over twenty years and April is typically the month when bluebirds begin to nest. I hope you will enjoy these monthly articles about different birds that you can see in the neighborhood.

Judy and I hope see you at one or both of the bird walks as we enjoy some warm spring weather while checking out our bluebird trail and learning more about the many birds of Hickory Farms.

BIRD OF THE MONTH: EASTERN BLUEBIRD (SIALIA SIALIS)

By Bob Cosgriff

Anyone who has ever seen a bluebird will understand why this species is everyone's favorite bird. The male is especially resplendent with a deep blue color setting off a russet, robin-like breast and white underparts. In fact, bluebirds are in the Thrush family, which includes the familiar American Robin. Unfortunately, several decades ago, bluebirds were one of many species greatly harmed by the indiscriminate use of the pesticide DDT, which causes weakening of eggshells. Another factor was habitat destruction as farms and orchards were turned into subdivisions and shopping malls. Competition for nesting cavities from European Starling and House ("English") Sparrow also created pressure on bluebird numbers. Bluebirds do well around humans, particularly in rural settings, but the factors above caused a sharp decline in their numbers. The idea of aiding them began in Illinois in the 1930's by a man named Thomas Musselman, who came up with the idea of a bluebird trail of manmade nest boxes. This idea gained great traction in the early 1970's when Lawrence Zeleny wrote a landmark book on bluebird restoration. As a result, state bluebird societies were formed and people began to put in bluebird boxes. With the ban on DDT in 1972 and more nesting sites available, bluebirds began to rebound. The Hickory Farms trail started out small in 1990. Currently, we have 10 boxes (five each in the lower and upper commons) and have had great success in attracting bluebirds. Judy and I are the trail monitors and we report statistics to the Virginia Bluebird Society annually. Monitoring begins in late March and continues weekly until August. Bluebirds can have two, and sometimes three, broods per year. Here in Northern Virginia, bluebirds do not migrate, so it is possible to see them throughout the winter. They are drawn to suet feeders. They will use our nesting boxes for protection against cold weather in the winter—several birds will huddle together in one box to keep warm.

Interesting facts:

1. There are three bluebird species in North America: Eastern Bluebird, Western Bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), and Mountain Bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*). Eastern and Western do not overlap in range, but Western and Mountain do, although as the name suggests, the Mountain Bluebird is typically found at higher elevations. The Mountain Bluebird is all blue.
2. Bluebirds are not really blue! There is no blue pigment in bird feathers. The color we see is caused by refraction of light through the structure of the feathers. In addition to bluebirds, there are only five other North American birds that are all or predominately blue: Blue Jay, Blue Grosbeak, Blue Bunting, Indigo Bunting, and Lazuli Bunting

Want to learn more about bluebirds? Check out these sites for photographs, recordings of their songs, and full information about the Eastern Bluebird:

- ◆ Cornell Lab of Ornithology: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern_Bluebird/id
- ◆ American Bird Conservancy: <https://abcbirds.org/bird/eastern-bluebird/>
- ◆ Virginia Bluebird Society: <https://www.virginiabluebirds.org/>

UPDATE ON LOWER COMMONS PATH ASPHALT REPAIR & DRAINAGE REPAIR

In their examination of the lowest elevation, eastern end of the Lower Commons drainage issue, the HFCA Ad-Hoc Working Group of volunteers continued to pursue the counsel of the Fairfax County Maintenance & Stormwater Division, which came out and inspected the buried stormwater pipe that runs north-to-south at the lowest part of the Lower Commons. The inspection showed that the pipe was working properly and not leaking. The Ad-Hoc Working Group also requested and received information about a possible grant fund application from the Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District (a non-governmental community partner with Fairfax County Government) for a "rain garden" to absorb and use the excess water in that area. They offered to provide us with a technician to advise us on the drainage issue and on "rain gardens", expected to contact us by mid-April. Any resident of Hickory Farms interested to assist in this or helping us to scope out a bidding document for the Lower Commons Path asphalt buckling repair at the far eastern end of the path, please email Jim Bever at vicepresident@hickoryfarms.org.

WHAT ARE THOSE BEES IN THE LOWER COMMON AREA?

By Bob Cosgriff

One of the goals of planting perennial native wildflowers in the common grounds is to attract pollinators, namely bees, butterflies, moths, and hummingbirds. The plants provide not only nectar, but also food for butterfly and moth larvae (caterpillars). Pollinators are vital for native plants as well as for garden crops since they fertilize the flowers when they enter to get at the nectar. Therefore, pollinators of all sorts are to be encouraged in Hickory Farms. This article will focus on bees.

In May and June, you will see numerous little piles of dirt that resemble miniature ant hills in the grass between the sledding hill and the black path in the lower common areas. If you look carefully, you will notice bees going in and out. You are likely to ask the question "Should something be done about this?"

The short answer is "no." As with anything in the natural world, the first thing is to find out what you're dealing with. The second thing is to know that, in most cases, co-existence is the best policy. It turns out that what we have is a colony of **Adrenid Bees** (sometimes called "miner bees"). According to information from the Virginia Tech Extension Service, Adrenid Bees are valuable pollinators and as such should not be controlled except as a last resort. While they can sting, they seldom do, and then only in self-defense. They are only out a few weeks a year, so by avoiding their nesting area for the few weeks they are active, there should be no problems with stinging.

The Virginia Tech guide provides information about other bees in Northern Virginia. One of these is the **Orchard Mason Bee**. These inoffensive bees nest in structures that can be purchased or made to encourage their presence. Since they seldom sting except in self-defense, Mason Bees are good to have around to add to the number of pollinators in the neighborhood.

Visit https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/ENTO/ENTO-151/ENTO-424.pdf and <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/70647/ENTO-151.pdf> for more information.

CALL FOR HISTORICAL NEIGHBORHOOD DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOS

Our webmaster is working on a historical archive of our neighborhood and is asking if anyone has images or documents from the last 40+ years. Specifically, we are looking for any photos taken in or around the neighborhood, or any of the original flyers advertising the different home models and the development. If you have anything you would like to share please email: webmaster@hickoryfarms.org.

FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY SPRING CLASSES AND SUMMER CAMPS

By Sean Coleman



Spring is officially here, and I hope you have had the opportunity to get outside to enjoy the warmer weather and our beautiful Fairfax County parks. Registration for Park Authority spring classes is open and summer camps are already 70% full. **Sign up now** for fitness classes, golf lessons, gardening, and more!

JOIN OUR LISTSERV

Want an easy way to stay in touch with the community, learn about going-on's, sell your goods, and more? Connect with Hickory Farms by joining the Hickory Farms ListServ! Hickory Farms utilizes Google Groups to manager our listserv. We chose this platform because it's simple, easy to use and free.

While any email address works with Google Groups, we highly recommend having a Gmail account because it is most neatly integrated with Google. If you don't have a Gmail account, you can sign up for one at <http://www.gmail.com>.

Once you have an account, visit <https://groups.google.com/my-groups> to sign into Google Groups. From there, you can go straight to <http://groups.google.com/g/hickory-farms-hoa/> and click the "Ask to Join." In the Reason for Joining, please include your address, phone number, and own/rent status to include in the neighborhood directory.

Once your membership is approved, you'll receive emails when they are sent to the listserv. You can adjust your membership settings - like changing single emails to a weekly digest - in your Google Groups Settings.

Please don't forget to review the guidelines on the Hickory Farms website here: <https://hickoryfarms.org/hickory-farms-listserv> . There's also information on how to post to the listserv, manage your account and more.

Finally, if you need basic Google Groups help, visit: <https://support.google.com/groups/answer/1067205?hl=en> . You can always contact the admins of the listserv for help or questions by emailing hickory-farms-hoa+managers@googlegroups.com.

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



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