



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

May 2023 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG

P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

HFCA BOARD & VOLUNTEERS

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- Social Committee: **VACANT**

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HOW TO CONTACT ...

- Board of Directors: hfca@hickoryfarms.org
- President: **VACANT**
- Architectural Control Committee: acc@hickoryfarms.org
- Treasurer: treasurer@hickoryfarms.org
- Common Areas: commonareas@hickoryfarms.org
- Webmaster: webmaster@hickoryfarms.org
- Newsletter: newsletter@hickoryfarms.org



CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!!

By Melissa Stark

Thank you, Allie Shaw and Steve Kubrak, for stepping up to volunteer and rejuvenate the Neighborhood Watch role! Neighbors, please show your support by responding to Allie's and Steve's short survey as noted in this month's newsletter.

Looking to help support our community? We have the following key positions open below.

Board Positions

- President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Valuable Volunteers

- Social - Great opportunity for a group of Moms to help lead and plan fun events together.

You can find out more information about these roles at <https://hickoryfarms.org/board-of-directors>. Please email the Hickory Farms Board of Directors at hfca@hickoryfarms.org with your interest.



PLEASE RESPOND TO NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH SURVEY

After a long hiatus due to COVID, we are hoping to once again start our Neighborhood Watch. For those who are new to Hickory Farms, like us, this was a volunteer group of neighbors who were assigned either a Friday or Saturday evening shift to walk or drive the neighborhood. The shifts are 9:00 p.m. to Midnight and take on average 45 to 90 minutes of your time.

The Neighborhood Watch is done with a volunteer partner of their mutual choice and is only 3 or 4 times a year. It is an official-sponsored partnership program with the Fairfax County Police Department.

A survey was sent out via the neighborhood list serv on April 25th asking for volunteers. Once I have a schedule set, I will share it with everyone.

Please reach out if you did not receive the survey or would like to volunteer.

Allie Shaw & Steven Kubrak
allieshaw@gmail.com

THE BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By Bob Cosgriff

Highlighting the bird news this month is an incredible first-ever sighting for our yard. On 9 March just before 9 a.m. as I was in the garage finishing up packing for a three-week trip to Florida, I heard crows mobbing something, most likely a hawk of some sort. I looked out of the window through the blinds and saw a very large bird flying low through our uphill neighbor's backyard into our yard. My first impression was a Turkey Vulture based on size. I ran out of the garage for a better look and saw this bird swoop up into a tree in another neighbor's yard just behind ours. I was amazed to see that it was an adult **Bald Eagle!** I ran in to get my binoculars and camera and called for Judy. The eagle remained perched for about five minutes, with a watchful crow nearby on the very same branch. Judy and I both got good looks and I was able to take several pictures. Here are the two best: one of the eagle just taking off from its perch and the other of the bird soaring about Burke Station Road.



Photos by Bob Cosgriff



Since the first-ever Hickory Farms sighting on Christmas Day of 2012, there have been a total of nine previous records of Bald Eagles flying over Hickory Farms (one reported by Jim Bever, one by former neighbors Sean and Claire Coleman, the others observed by us), but this is the first time one has actually been documented perching here. I'm tempted to say, "The eagle has landed!"

Our backyard bird count was put on hold while we were out of town, resuming on 31 March. However, we added two of our favorite birds during the nine observation days in the month, the first being Fox Sparrow (3/2) and then Purple Finch (3/31). So far in April, we have added Red-shouldered Hawk, Chipping Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, House Wren, Gray Catbird and Chimney Swift, bringing our year-to-date total to 39 species, about par for the course.

The value of keeping long-term records is shown by the Chipping Sparrow. We usually get them in the third week of March, the earliest date being 3/16 (2014) and the latest being 4/17 (2013). This year's arrival on 4/10 was the second-latest first yard sighting. Basically, they were two weeks later than the average first arrival date. However, the Chimney Swift's arrival was the earliest date by two days.

We began our yearly bluebird trail monitoring on 1 April. To date, we have two nests, both in the lower commons, one with five eggs and the other with four eggs. This is a good start to the year. If all goes well, these birds should hatch about 8 May. Jarrett Stark installed clear plastic skylights on four boxes. There is some evidence that this adaptation discourages House Sparrows, which prefer dark cavities, whereas bluebirds don't seem to mind light entering their

nests from above. One of the active nests is in a box with a skylight, whereas the other nest is in an unmodified box. A nearby box with no skylight continues to attract sparrows. The experiment continues.

As for our Purple Martin colony, so far we have not observed any birds taking up residence. This is not a cause for concern since migrating martins can straggle in until June. While the birds are in residence at the existing colonies at George Mason, it will be the latecomers needing nesting sites taken by the earlier arrivals who will be most likely to find our colony and move in. Stay tuned.

For a general topic this month, I have chosen the birding term “life bird.” This is used to describe seeing a particular species for the first time ever. Serious birders keep a “life list” of all species seen and it is always an exciting thing to add a new bird—a “life bird”—to one’s list. As you can imagine, it can get harder and harder to do this as time goes by. Basically, it becomes necessary to travel to different places to find different habitats that are home to species different from the home-turf birds. There are about 900 species that can be seen in the U.S. (including Alaska and Hawaii, and pelagic species seen only offshore). In Virginia, 487 species (resident, migratory, or accidental) have been recorded. A more workable number for most birders here in Virginia would be in the 100-150 range. Since we moved to Hickory Farms in 1979, we have recorded 124 species (with 96 seen in our yard, the remainder in the common areas). That is a pretty impressive number for a 63-acre suburban subdivision in the middle of a county of over 1.2 million people.

The good thing about the birding hobby is that it is transportable! So no matter where you go there are birds to see. By planning ahead, you can locate National Wildlife Refuges, state parks, and other places to see interesting birds. Did you know that the settling ponds of water treatment plants are great places to see birds, especially ducks and wading birds? Returning home from our recent trip to Florida, we stopped at the Carolina Sandhills NWR to see the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. (Don’t let the name fool you—the small patch of red feathers on the head that gives the bird its name is rarely visible!). This refuge has one of the two largest breeding populations of this woodpecker. In previous years, we had stopped at other places in South Carolina and Florida with known populations, but always at the wrong time of year for the optimal viewing opportunity, which occurs during the breeding season beginning in late March/early April. This time, we hit the date right. Upon arrival, we spoke to a ranger who gave us a map of the best locations. At our first stop, we saw a pair of these birds, giving both of us a new life bird!

As a final note, Judy and I will lead a bird walk on Saturday, 6 May, at Lake Mercer in Springfield, just past South Run District Park off the Fairfax County Parkway. It takes about 20 minutes to drive there, and we’d like to meet at the parking area at the end of Wagon Wheel Lane no later than 9 a.m. This is a good spot for seeing migratory songbirds, including thrushes, warblers, and orioles. The trail is flat and easy to walk and offers good views of the lake where waterfowl and waders might be seen. I have put additional details, including a Google Maps link, on a Listserv posting.

In the meantime, I urge you to get out there to hone your bird identification skills. Our own common areas are a great place to start this year. Perhaps you might be able to begin or add to your own life list with some of the many birds of Hickory Farms!



WHAT ARE THOSE BEES IN THE LOWER COMMON AREA?

By Bob Cosgriff (reprinted from April 2022)

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.

LAMB MOWERS' UPDATE – MORE VISITS PLANNED!

By Melissa Stark

Thank you to those neighbors who were able to come out and see Lamb Mowers' sheep and lambs tackle our annual weeds and some invasive vines in the Upper Commons on April 10th and 19th. I have heard so many positive things about this Common Areas alternative to tackling the weeds in our islands. I am glad that this weeding event has become a social event as well! Many neighbors in attendance said that it brought some happiness to their day, a well needed work break, a chance to gather and catch up with neighbors, and it brought a bit of the country back to Hickory Farms.

For those neighbors that missed both events, you can watch Lamb Mowers sheep and lambs from our Hickory Farms event on April 19th via NBC's broadcast via YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zd6_UK1bNYc.

We will be looking to have a visit or two from Lamb Mowers in June, July, or August, once their schedule opens up. This will mainly focus on helping remove stilt grass, an invasive annual grass that seeds abundantly, and displaces regular grass & natives within our common area lawns & islands. Keep connected on when these events will be scheduled, by visiting our Hickory Farms website calendar.





HFCA BOARD MEETING NOTICE

HFCA Board Meetings continue to be held via Zoom. Unless otherwise notified or due to an unforeseen change, HFCA Board Meetings will be held the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7 pm.

To join a Board meeting, contact any HFCA Board Member or send a request to join to hfca@hickoryfarms.org. You will be provided with the Zoom meeting URL, meeting number and passcode.



NOTES FROM THE COMMON AREAS COMMITTEE

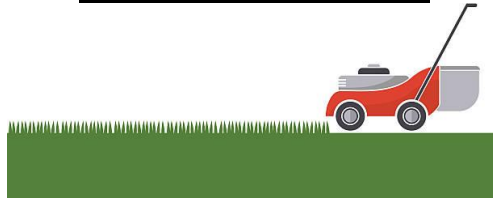
Visit our Hickory Farms calendar often in the months of April and May to see upcoming weeding, mulch spreading, ground cover planting events. We are always looking for helpful hands to help keep our Common Areas looking beautiful! <https://hickoryfarms.org/calendar>



RESIDENT INFORMATION NEEDED FOR RENTAL PROPERTIES

The HFCA Board of Directors is making sure our records are up to date for all Hickory Farms properties. For those properties who are renting out their homes, please email your renters contact information (name, phone number and email) to hfca@hickoryfarms.org.

SPRING MOWING TIPS



Source: Purdue University lawn care tips: <https://turf.purdue.edu/spring-mowing-tips/#:~:text=Remember%20the%20mowing%20%E2%80%9Crule%20of,the%20turf%20reaches%204.5%20inches.>

Last week's warm temperatures really made the grass green-up and begin growing which means many people are starting to think about seasonal mowing.

Probably one of the biggest mistakes homeowners make is not starting to mow their lawns soon enough. Remember the mowing "rule of thumb". For optimum turf health "try not to remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade during any one single mowing". For example, this means that for a lawn being maintained at 3 inches you should not be removing more than 1.5 inches of leaf tissue or mow when the turf reaches 4.5 inches. Not mowing soon enough or mowing in excess of 4.5 inches will violate the "1/3 rule" and result in turf stress and could affect rooting or scalp the turf.

Preparation:

- Remove any lawn debris prior to mowing (twigs, sticks, leaves, children's play equipment, etc.)
- #1 Make sure your mower is tuned up and ready for the season: check the oil, gas, etc.
- #2 USE SHARP BLADES!!!, dull blades = increased turf stress and poor mowing appearance

Other considerations:

- Q. Should I return clippings or bag them?
- A. Generally it is best to return clippings back to the lawn as they are a significant source of plant nutrients, and it takes less time to mow. "If" you want to remove clippings it is appropriate as it may remove some of the unsightly dead leaf tissue but make sure you properly dispose of the clippings (e.g. compost pile, etc.)

- Q. Is it better to mow lower than normal in the spring?
- A. The answer is yes and no..... It does not hurt the turf to mow slightly (1/2") lower than normal (2 ½ – 3 ½) for the first mowing or two as this may remove some of the brown dead tissue from the leaf tips. The danger would be first scalping and second if you continue this for the remainder of the season it likely will negatively affect rooting depth (deeper roots = superior drought tolerance!!!). Lastly, mowing too low could make the turf more prone to crabgrass invasion as the turf may lose shoot density and crabgrass seeds require sunlight for germination.

JOIN THE LISTSERV TO ACCESS NEWSLETTERS, NOTICES ABOUT EVENTS AND MORE!

All are encouraged to connect with Hickory Farms by joining the Hickory Farms Listserv! Hickory Farms utilizes Google Groups to manage our listserv. 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.

STUDENT YELLOW PAGES



Shannon Turner (17)
Nathan Turner (12)
Lily Bucher (12)
Kiera Stark (13)
Greysen Berg (15)
Cedar Batz (17)

Angmturn@hotmail.com
Angmturn@hotmail.com
Lrbucher4@gmail.com
commonareas@hickoryfarms.org
210-428-5535
571-398-1467

Babysitting, pet sitting
Dog walking, yard work, leaf removal
Babysitting/mother's helper, pet sitting
Pet sitting
Yard work, leaf raking
Dog walking, dog sitting

If you offer services such as those listed above, or others such as tutoring, etc., and wish to be included in future listings, please email the Newsletter Editor at newsletter@hickoryfarms.org.

NEWSLETTER ITEM DEADLINE AND DISTRIBUTION NOTICE

Newsletter items are due the 25th of the month, for the next month's issue. Please send submissions to newsletter@hickoryfarms.org.

Newsletters are distributed via the HFCA listserv and posted on the HFCA website. Paper versions of the newsletters are no longer delivered to households. All are encouraged to access the digital newsletter via the listserv or the HFCA website.



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