



# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

April 2024 Edition



[HICKORYFARMS.ORG](http://HICKORYFARMS.ORG)

P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

## HFCA BOARD & VOLUNTEERS

President: **VACANT**

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Assistant Treasurer: Tad Weed

Common Areas: Melissa Stark

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Common Areas Committee: Bob and Judy Cosgriff, Rich Dudley, Larry Rogers, Melissa and Jarrett Stark

Neighborhood Block Reps: Jim Bever, Alyssa Eswood, Ellen Head, Justin Mensen, Meredith Perkins, Lee Sottile, Jen Spencer

Newsletter Editor: Jennifer Maloney

Social Committee: Laura Bucher and Juliette Giordano

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## **HOW TO CONTACT ...**

Board of Directors: [hfca@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:hfca@hickoryfarms.org)

President: **VACANT**

Architectural Control Committee: [acc@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:acc@hickoryfarms.org)

Treasurer: [treasurer@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:treasurer@hickoryfarms.org)

Common Areas: [commonareas@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:commonareas@hickoryfarms.org)

Webmaster: [webmaster@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:webmaster@hickoryfarms.org)

Newsletter: [newsletter@hickoryfarms.org](mailto:newsletter@hickoryfarms.org)

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## **SAVE THE DATE!!**

### **HFCA's COMMUNITY YARD SALE IS MAY 18!!**

By Pete Scala

After taking a break, we're planning to have a Community Yard Sale again this year. Pete Scala and Jessica Du Bois will run it, and we plan to hold it on Saturday, May 18th.

There may be a very small fee to cover costs, but HFCA is planning to offset the cost, so we'll see. It definitely will be much less than \$10.

Let Pete know if you want to participate in a Yard Sale. Call or email him [(703) 764-0730 (landline), (703) 909-6341 (text) or scalapr@verizon.net ].

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.

How does it work? 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.

We'll have some helpful hints in next month's newsletter.



## THE BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By Bob Cosgriff

February is typically a slow month for adding new birds. Most of the species that are here for the winter have already made an appearance in January. This year was no exception. We tallied 32 species in January, our second-highest total for that month. In February, we added two more species, Red-tailed Hawk and Black Vulture, both year-round residents. March saw the arrival of three additional species: Fox Sparrow on 3/10, Barred Owl (heard the night of 3/11 along Rabbit Run fairly close to Cotton Farm Road), and finally, a gorgeous Pine Warbler on 3/14. This is only the third yard record for the Pine Warbler (the others were 4/15/19 and 1/11/21) and fifth neighborhood record (upper commons, 4/15/08 and lower commons, 4/16/09). As of the submission of this article on 25 March our year-to-date tally stood at **37** species, which is about average for the date. Our high day was **26** species on 3/22 and 3/24 and our low day was **18** on 3/13; our average daily species count stands at **22** for March, up from 19 for February.

April should see the arrival of several new species: Purple Finch, Chipping Sparrow, Gray Catbird, House Wren, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and perhaps some early-arriving warblers. Last year was atypical in that we saw only one warbler and one vireo species and no other neo-tropical species during the migration. We are hopeful that this year will be more normal. If so, we should hit 60 species or perhaps more. The peak week is 5-12 May. Soon thereafter, migratory birds have moved on and the year-round birds are very busy raising young, so the count typically plummets after 15 May, the end of our spring count.

In other bird news, the bluebird nesting season has started already. The first egg was laid in a box in the lower commons on **20 March!** This is our earliest first-egg date in the 13 years that we have been compiling data. In fact, it is the earliest date by seven days. As the following table shows, dates vary from year to year. For April, six first eggs have come before the 15<sup>th</sup> and five after the 15<sup>th</sup> with the latest first egg being 4/26:

2012	April 20
2013	April 26
2014	April 20
2015	April 16
2016	April 5
2017	March 27
2018	April 1
2019	April 6
2020	April 11
2021	April 17
2022	April 7
2023	April 8
2024	<b>March 20 - a new Hickory Farms record!</b>



Source: Deposit Photos

One thing that stands out is that from 2012 to 2015, the dates were later in April compared to 2016 through 2024 (with the exception of 2021, which was in the second half of the month). Winter 2024 was a bit warmer than 2023 and this March overall was also warmer, despite a cold snap during the third week. However, we cannot conclude that the weather is the only factor in this year's early egg-laying. It could have to do with other factors, such as overall health of the bluebird pairs, or even the number of birds competing for boxes. Last year we had a record number of fledglings at least some of which probably remained in our neighborhood (the numbers are 50 eggs of which 43 hatched and 40 fledged). Even assuming a conservative 50% survival rate, that leaves 20 new birds looking for a cavity in which to nest. The most vigorous birds are going to get an early start on breeding. Given this early first-egg date, there is a good chance that some boxes will see three broods this year. We are hopeful that we can also attract Tree Swallows once again and that they can successfully bring off a brood or two.

Purple Martins typically begin to return to our area in April. In preparation for this, we will raise the martin colony to the full-up position on or about 1 April. The birds can continue to arrive in May and even early June. We are hopeful that some of the martins that were hatched here last year will return and perhaps others will come as well to help fill up our colony.

So stay tuned for more updates. In the meantime, take advantage of the nice springtime weather to get out and about in our beautiful common areas. The bush-hogging that Jarrett Stark did in the fall has cleared out a lot of vegetation and created a more bluebird- and martin-friendly environment in both common areas. This gives all of us a better opportunity to see these—and other—beautiful and beneficial birds of Hickory Farms.

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Dark Skies Week is April 2 – 8. For information, [visit the Dark Skies website.](#)

## **UPDATE ON PROPOSED JOINT-USE BASEBALL-CRICKET STADIUM**

Source: *The Walkinshaw Advisory* 3.28.24 <https://tr.ee/mpguGJQfvY>

On March 28, 2024, George Mason University President, Gregory Washington, released the following statement:

*"The university has decided not to move forward with the Washington Freedom on negotiations to build a temporary baseball and cricket stadium on the West Campus.*

*After hard work and due diligence from the team at Mason, we have concluded that this opportunity does not meet the strategic objectives and interests of our campus and community and the Washington Freedom.*

*We appreciate the continued feedback and dialogue with leaders across the Commonwealth and with the local community. Moving forward, the university will maintain a dialogue with all stakeholders and improve opportunities for feedback. We remain committed to working together to grow the university and build a strong and sustainable infrastructure, including our athletics facilities, for everyone who participates with Mason.*

*I want to thank the Board of Visitors, our state and local elected officials, and our community partners for their support as we engaged in this complex process for consideration, leading to the right decision for Mason at this time."*

## **SUMMER FUN AT GMU**

George Mason University offers a variety of programs to engage children through academics, the arts, and sports/recreation camps.

Participants can explore conflict resolution, conservation, game design and technology, podcasting, theater, music, and more. Camps are available on the Fairfax campus, Science and Technology (Manassas) campus, and virtually. Visit <https://camps.gmu.edu/> for details



**JOIN OUR LISTSERV!**

Don't miss any news! There's no better way to stay in touch than through our Hickory Farms email listserv. Visit <https://hickoryfarms.org/>, click "Email Listserv" in the "For Residents" menu and follow the instructions.

**HFCA BOARD MEETING NOTICE**

HFCA Board Meetings are held via Microsoft Teams. 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](mailto:hfca@hickoryfarms.org). You will be provided with the Zoom meeting URL, meeting number and passcode.

**STUDENT YELLOW PAGES**



Lily Bucher	Lrbucher4@gmail.com	Babysitting/mother's helper, pet sitting
Kiera Stark	commonareas@hickoryfarms.org	Pet sitting
Greysen Berg	210-428-5535	Yard work, leaf raking
Cedar Batz	571-398-1467	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](mailto: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](mailto:newsletter@hickoryfarms.org).

Newsletters are distributed via the HFCA listserv and posted on the HFCA website. All are encouraged to access the digital newsletter via the listserv or the HFCA website.