



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

August 2025 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

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Juliette Giordano

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HOW TO CONTACT ...

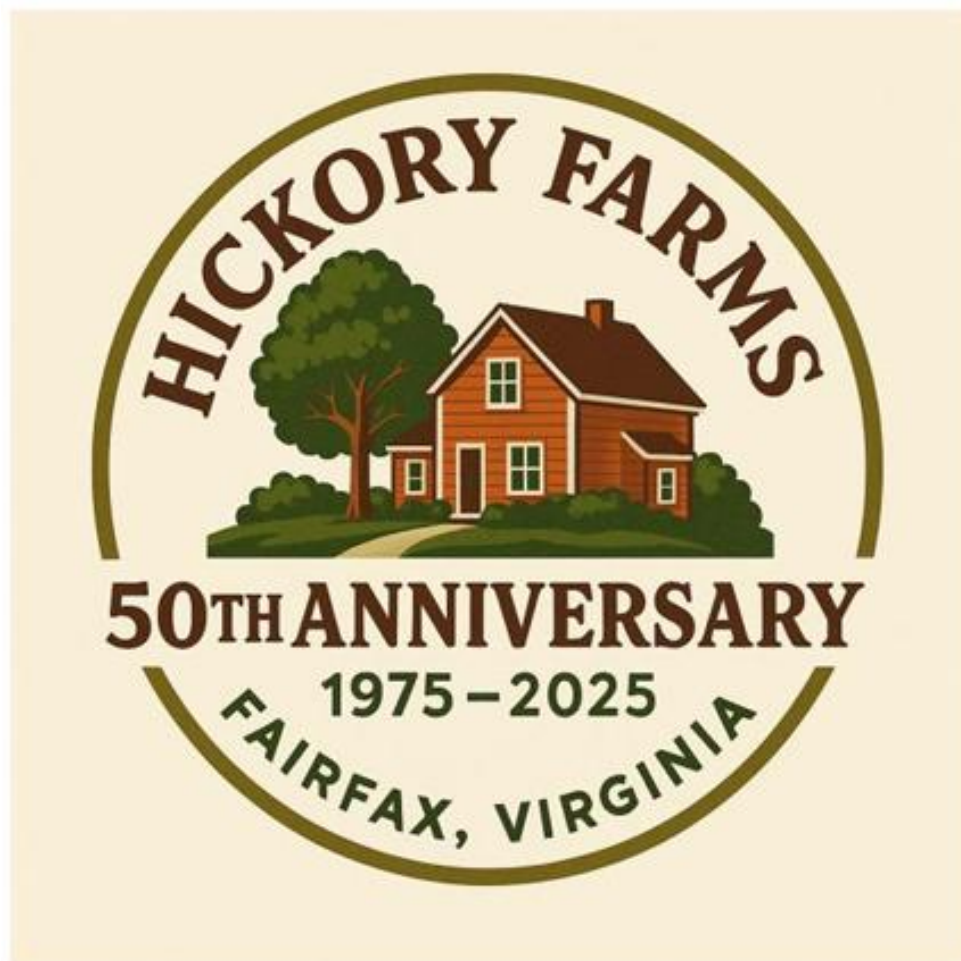
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HICKORY FARMS 50TH ANNIVERSARY LOGO DESIGN CONTEST RESULT

By Laura Bucher and Juliette Giordano,
HFCA Social Committee

Congratulations to Clair Hill, the winner of the Hickory Farms 50th Anniversary Logo Design Contest! Clair's creative vision captured the spirit of our milestone celebration, and her outstanding design (shown below) will be featured on commemorative souvenirs for our 50th anniversary celebration.

A big thank you to everyone who participated, whether by submitting your unique designs or casting your votes. Your enthusiasm and creativity made this contest a success. Congratulations again to Clair, and thank you all for helping us mark this special occasion!



SEPTEMBER 9 SPECIAL ELECTION - 11TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Early voting has started for the 11th Congressional District Special Election (vacancy created by the passing of the Honorable Gerald E. Connolly). Only residents of the 11th Congressional District are eligible to vote.

Visit <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/elections/early-voting> for in-person early voting locations and more information.



THE BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By Bob Cosgriff

The months of June and July were hotter than normal. Extreme heat can stress adult birds and also cause failure of eggs or the death of hatchlings. Some strategies that birds use to prevent these outcomes include: reducing activity; staying in the shade; bathing where shallow water is available; and 'panting'—that is, opening their beaks to let inner body heat dissipate through the surface membranes of the throat. Brooding birds try to minimize time on the eggs or in the box with the hatchlings, since the ambient temperature will provide all the heat they need and crowding the nest can lead to problems. In terms of our nest boxes, they are built with ventilation slits to help vent hot air out of the boxes. While adult birds can get the moisture they need from occasional drinks from water sources (to include backyard bird baths), the hatchlings get theirs from the food provided, namely, insects. So even though adult birds slow down in the heat, they must still continue to feed their growing chicks.

Our high temperatures have had some effect on at least one box in the current nesting season here. Our first round produced 14 bluebird and five tree swallows. The second round produced 19 more bluebird eggs (Tree Swallows produce only one brood per season.) However, in one box, five eggs did not hatch, suggesting that the extreme heat might have been the culprit. In another box, we had one hatchling and three eggs about to hatch when we checked. The next week, all the chicks were gone. Had heat been the problem, the bodies would have remained in the box. This suggests nest predation. If it had been another bird (house wren or house sparrow) they would have killed the chicks and left them in the nest. However, this year, house sparrows have not been observed trying to nest in any of our boxes and there has been a distinct lack of house wrens (see below). This leaves a snake as the likely suspect even though there is a baffle on the pole of the box in question. Two other boxes with a total of 10 eggs did succeed, so as of the end of July, our year total is **24** bluebirds, compared to 26 last year and 40 in 2023. This is the sixth year in 14 years of date collection where we have exceeded 20 fledglings, so it was a good year overall.

While we don't lower the martin colony during breeding to count martin chicks, the martins remained on the nesting boxes throughout the heatwave. While they arrived at the end of April this year, they followed the martin habit of taking their sweet time in getting down to business; nesting is typically in June and July, exactly the time that it was the hottest here. To gauge nesting success, the best we can do is to try to count immature birds, which can be tricky since they are not always flying about the fields when we are up there and they do resemble the females. We did have six nesting pairs, so it is possible that we produced 30 new martins! On 12 July, we saw four immature martins on the colony and five on a later date. I suspect others were out foraging or else roosting in the nearby trees to stay cool. But there are other factors potentially in play. Mr. Mike Bishop, the Purple Martin expert who helped us install our colony, provided some valuable information about martin nest mortality. Egg failure is common with first-year bird parents. Extreme heat can affect eggs and chicks negatively. Hatchlings can fall from the nest structure before they are fully fledged (this has happened at his own colonies) and thus be taken by predators or die because their parents cannot easily feed them unless they can be placed back in the nest. Fledglings are easier prey for avian predators such as Cooper's Hawks, crows, even owls, since they are not as aware of the danger these birds pose and are not as adept at escaping as older birds. As he says, "they face a lot challenges that they can't control, but they always seem to have a good number return each year! All you can do is what you can." So, whatever the number of martin fledglings we produced this year, we have added to the overall population, which means that next year they should return to Hickory Farms and hopefully increase the number of nesting pairs.

In terms of backyard birds, we had one surprising addition in mid-July: **Wood Thrush** (*Hylocichla mustelina*). It was heard singing in the Rabbit Run RPA right across from our house and within the point-count radius for our yearly yard census. This brings our 2025 total to **60** species. So to recognize this milestone, Wood Thrush is our Bird of the Month. Read more about this beautiful, but reclusive, singer, here: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Wood_Thrush/id and be sure to listen to the audio recording of its song.

One anomaly this year has been the complete absence of House Wrens, which are usually very obvious with their continuous singing and hyper-active behavior. This is the first year since we began keeping records that we have not had house wrens nesting in our yard. In fact, it is only the third year (2015, 2018) that they have not nested in at least one box in our bluebird trail although two “trial” nests (*i.e.*, nests that were started but never completed) were observed. In fact, I have seen or heard only a handful of house wrens in the cemetery, in neighboring Fairfax City, or on the GMU campus. I am not sure why this dearth of house wrens is happening.

Two other birds that we have not seen as much as in past years are Chimney Swift and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. In fact, we have logged only a couple of sightings of each. In the case of the swifts, I suspect that a reduction in the number of winged insects caused by widespread pesticide use has put a dent in their food supply. As for the hummers, we saw a male earlier in the spring visiting our feeders on a few occasions, but since then, nothing. We are hoping that with the blossoming of cardinal flowers and blue-black salvia (both potent hummingbird attractors) that we will see hummingbirds stopping by to fatten up as the fall migration approaches in August and September. We are keeping our hummingbird feeders full as an added incentive.

On the plus side, we continue to see Eastern Towhee, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch, Mourning Dove, American Goldfinch, American Robin, Gray Catbird, House Finch, Song Sparrow, and the five usual woodpeckers, which is a sure sign that all these species are nesting in Hickory Farms. We have also had two visits by a Brown Thrasher. Since they are not in migration, they must be breeding here as well.

Speaking of migration, August is the beginning of the fall migration. In fact, some species (*e.g.*, warblers) begin moving south in July, their breeding duties done. Hopefully, this will bring some birds we did not see in the spring. Shorebirds are also on the move starting in late July and early August, extending into September. While they are not likely to be seen in Hickory Farms, they can sometimes be spotted on nearby lakes and rivers and of course on the coastal beaches in Maryland, Delaware, and in the Tidewater region. The avian world runs on its own schedule and is full of surprises, so check back next month for more news about the many birds of Hickory Farms.

SAVE THE DATE!

**The Hickory Farms Community Association
Annual Meeting will be held online, Tuesday,
October 21, 2025, from 7 pm to 8 pm.**

IT'S ALMOST BACK TO SCHOOL TIME!



BUS STOP ARM CAMERAS: WARNINGS AND CITATIONS TO CONTINUE

Last spring, cameras were installed on the stop arms of 50 FCPS school buses. The cameras will be used to identify drivers who pass stopped school buses while children are entering and exiting the bus. This is referred to as a “stop arm violation”.

Violators will receive warnings. After a 30-day warning period, citations will be issued.

According to Virginia law, drivers must stop for stopped school buses with flashing red lights on and their stop signs extended. Motorists should stop when approaching from any direction, unless there is a barrier or median separating their lane from where the bus is stopped. Motorists should remain stopped until everyone is clear, and the bus is moving.

Source: <https://www.fcps.edu/news/school-bus-safety-program-update>




Stay up to date with the latest information and class offerings in the West Springfield District by subscribing to their newsletter at: <https://bit.ly/westspringfieldFCPDnewsletter>.

PERSONAL SAFETY FOR COLLEGE BOUND STUDENTS

Tuesday, August 12, 2025
6:30PM-7:30PM

West Springfield District Station
6140 Rolling Road
Springfield, VA




 **Kids in Today's Society**

Tuesday, August 19, 2025
6:30PM-8:00PM

West Springfield District Station
6140 Rolling Road
Springfield, VA



 **AVOIDING SCAMS AND FRAUD**

Saturday, August 23, 2025
10:00AM-11:00AM

West Springfield District Station
6140 Rolling Road
Springfield, VA

STUDENT YELLOW PAGES



Lily Bucher
Kiera Stark
Cedar Batz

Lrbucher4@gmail.com
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571-398-1467

Babysitting/mother's helper, pet sitting
Pet sitting
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.

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.

For further information, contact any HFCA Board Member or hfca@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 will be distributed via paper copy to residents' homes and can also be accessed via our Hickory Farms website, <https://hickoryfarms.org/>. If you would like to opt out of receiving the paper copy and would like to receive it digitally, please email us at hfca@hickoryfarms.org.