



# The Flyer

## Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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[www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org)

January 2009

### President's Corner

By Shirley Devan

If the raw winter days keep you inside, use the opportunity to closely observe the birds that visit your feeder stations. If necessary, remove the screens on your windows (don't need them in the winter anyway) and grab your binoculars if your feeders are more than 10-15 feet away.

Remember to throw some seeds on the ground for the ground feeders when you refill your tube feeders. Note the ground feeders vs the tube feeders.

Notice the size differences in the birds around your feeders. Observe how much larger the American Robin is than the Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Who eats what? Who travels together?

Keep an eye on your suet feeder. Who else besides woodpeckers eat suet? How many different woodpeckers come to your suet?

What birds take up residence on the feeders and which ones dart in and out with one seed each time? Who are the bullies of the feeder station?

If you want a quick and easy "brush pile," toss some small logs from your woodpile out beyond your feeders. On the days you "pick up sticks" in the yard, throw them over there too – not too neatly! Then watch the birds lurking in your brush pile before they come to the feeder. The brush pile provides important protection from the Red-tailed Hawks and Red-shouldered Hawks usually lurking nearby.

Keep your birdbaths filled with water. I just watched two American Robins bathing in my birdbath on the ground. Bathing is important for feather maintenance.

Just for fun, keep your hummingbird feeder out all year with fresh sugar water solution. More and more rare Rufous Hummingbirds are appearing in our area. Even if you don't bring in a rare hummer, you might be surprised to see what sips out of your feeder. Some local folks report warblers and orioles attracted to their hummingbird feeders. By the

way, if you have a hummingbird at your feeder after mid-October, contact someone in the bird club. Likely it is a rare visitor from the south or west.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is coming up in February! Use January to get in shape! And report your backyard birds to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fmb19481@verizon.net](mailto:fmb19481@verizon.net) for inclusion in the newsletter. Not all of us have the "usual suspects."

### January Meeting

Club member Mike Powell will present a program on *Birding Galapagos*. Mike, his wife Susan and son Alex visited Galapagos in July 2008.

Mike grew up in an Air Force family but returned to Virginia to attend Christopher Newport University for his BS degree, ODU for his MS degree, and Eastern Virginia Medical School for his MD. He was a physician in the Air Force for 10 years. He is a practicing oncologist in the Williamsburg area. He is an avid birder, photographer, and VA Master Naturalist.

Plan to join us on January 21, 2009 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117, Millington Hall, on the William and Mary campus.

### A Summary of the 2008 Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count

By Bill Williams

The contrasting faces of weather Sunday, December 21, 2008 created an array of challenging circumstances for the 53 participants, a record number for this count, who bundled up to pile out for our 32nd annual Williamsburg Christmas Bird Count (CBC). It wasn't enough that it was 38° F before dawn, but it was raining to boot. Conditions like that put a literal damper on detecting bird species which tend to be routinely active as "last night" gives way to daylight, not to mention dousing most chances for owl sounds. Nevertheless, perseverance paid uncharacteristic-for-2008 dividends, as gradual reduction in rain showers preceded a delightful clearing by noon. All in all, the teams found 109 species (32-year average is 108), includ-

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## Wild Birds Unlimited

Don't forget that the Williamsburg Bird Club receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount for everything our members spend at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace. Of course, you do have to let them know that you are a member.

## Welcome Back as a Member

Barbara Rockwell

ing two new species for the count-Northern Gannet and Short-eared Owl. Northern Gannets are regularly and most often seen in winter east of the Coleman Bridge in Yorktown and rarely if ever west of there. So one adult sitting on the York River north off Felgates Creek was quite a surprise. Extraordinary too were 2 Short-eared Owls found by Gary Driscole, Brian Taber, Adrienne Frank, David Monahan, and Jeanette Navia at Hog Island Wildlife Management Area in Surry County, one of which was photographed. This species had only been recorded locally twice in the past, including 2 at Hog Island 20-26



Brian Taber photographed this Short-eared Owl.

January 1991. Another rarity was a striking male Eurasian Wigeon at Powhatan Secondary found by Fred Blystone and Gus Hall. This was our ninth local record for this species and our second CBC record, the first being one at Cheatham Annex on 18 December 2005.

The count's 109th species came to our attention somewhat circuitously by way of the club's dear friend at Wild Birds Unlimited, Val Copping. Val had been told of a hummingbird that was visiting a feeder in Riverview Plantation, part of the Skimino section of the count circle. After some e-mail exchanges Christmas Eve, a phone call to the homeowner revealed the bird had been present daily since 22 November and had been seen on the day of the count. Shirley Devan and Jeanette Navia made a visit there on December 27th and were able to confirm the hummer was a beautiful male *Selasphorus* species hummingbird, either a Rufous Hummingbird or an Allen's Hummingbird. The only way to know for sure which species it is is to capture the individual to carefully examine the amount and distribution of color on the bird's back, the shape of the wing primaries, and shapes of the tips of the rectrices, the tail feathers. Contact with the Bird Banding Laboratory was made and we look forward to learning what the expert's determine.

Species for which there were all-time high counts were Brown Pelican (49) and Cooper's Hawk (6). Brown Pelicans were first recorded on our CBC in 1992, then not again until 2000. Since then the species has become regular with a previous CBC high of 26 on the December 16, 2007 count. Cooper's Hawks were rarely recorded on this CBC prior to 1995. The species is now regularly reported including the previous high of 5 on the 19 December 2004 CBC.

Although not the highest tally for this CBC, there were 4 Baltimore Orioles recorded with at least 3 at one feeder in the Vineyards. It is hard to imagine we will ever surpass the total of 15 found during our 21 December 1980 Christmas Count, the national high for all CBCs that year!

Species found during the day that are not normally reported on this count were an Osprey, 19 Dunlin at Felgates Creek, and 9 Tree Swallows at Hog Island. Other good finds were a Gray Catbird detected by Dan Cristol, Ann Condon, and Kathi and Mac Metsayer in the Jamestown section, and a Common Yellowthroat discovered by Susan Powell and her Kingsmill observ-

ers. And it was good that at least a few Purple Finches (9) and Pine Siskins (13) were located during the count day.

Notable species that were missed this year were Redhead, American Woodcock, Eastern Screech Owl, Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, and Marsh Wren. The count also missed Ruth Beck's participation for the first time, but we know that won't become a trend.

A hardy cheer from everyone who made it to the compilation festivities at Carrot Tree Kitchens. Capping off a cold, windy afternoon with warm Brunswick Stew, mulled cider, and a plate of scrumptious goodies over visions of rare birds dancing in our heads could not have been more appreciated. Thanks to our Secret Santa and especially to Debi Helseth at Carrot Tree for what we hope will become a grand tradition. Thanks to Julie Breeden and Nick Flanders for taking control of the Skimino count section, all of our Newport News friends, and to all the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists who made the time to contribute to this very important citizen science endeavor.

You can download a copy of the 2008 Christmas Bird Count finally tally from our club website.

## December Bird Sightings

Report your backyard birds and local sightings to Fred Blystone at 229-4346 or [fmb19481@verizon.net](mailto:fmb19481@verizon.net). If you encounter interesting birds on your vacation/travels, please share!

**Dec 2:** During an afternoon walk around parts of Warhill Sports Complex, Shirley Devan finds 20 species of birds, the highlights being a dozen Hooded Mergansers and three Gadwall on the pond behind the multi-purpose field.

**Dec 4:** Lois Leeth reports the following birds were in her yard today—2 Brown Thrashers, Juncos, 2 White-throated Sparrows, 1 Carolina Wren, Blue Jays, Song Sparrows, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Mourning Doves,



**Dec 5:** Bill Williams, Alex Minarik, Shirley Devan and Fred Blystone bird in Hampton, Poquoson & Yorktown—around 60 species are seen during the day—the highlights were Black-crowned Night-Herons at Ridgeway Park in Hampton, Northern Gannet at Buckroe and Yorktown Beach and the world's most co-operative Merlin at Buckroe Beach. Picture by Shirley Devan.

**Dec 7:** Brian Taber and Fred Blystone drive to Lynchburg and see the **Calliope Hummingbird** that had been reported there—this is only the third record of this species in Virginia.

**Dec 8:** Jan Garrity reports mature Bald Eagles, Belted Kingfishers and Osprey at Wormley Creek in York County.

**Dec 9:** Bill Williams, Alex Minarik and Shirley Devan drive to Lynchburg and see the **Calliope Hummingbird** and then on to Greene County where they see the much reported **Snowy Owl**.

**Dec 15:** Lois Leeth had the following birds in her yard—Two White-breasted Nuthatches, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, American Crows and Blue Jays.

**Dec 16:** Alex Minarik reports there were three Pine Siskins at her feeders. Later in the afternoon two turkeys flew up from the swamp and roosted in a tree behind her house.

**Dec 22:** Hugh Beard sees **Eurasian Wigeon** (reported the day before on Christmas Count) in pond near Powhatan Secondary. (See picture on last page.)

**Dec 22:** Shirley Devan report a feeding frenzy around her feeder station between 9:40 and 9:50 am. She had Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrush, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, Dark-eyed Juncos, Northern Cardinals, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Carolina Wren, White-throated Sparrow and White-breasted Nuthatch.

**Dec 24:** Fred Blystone went to Jamestown Island and birded from the car—up to and including the first pull off after the Pitch and Tar Swamp bridge. Ended up with about 25 species. Best bird of the day was a male Baltimore Oriole.

**Dec 25:** Shirley Devan and her sister took a brief walk along Longhill Swamp—saw 13 species of birds, the highlights being a Red-headed Woodpecker, a Red-tailed Hawk, a Brown Thrasher and a female Eastern Towhee.

**Dec 27:** Bill Williams, Shirley Devan and Jeanette Navia drive out to Riverview Plantation to see the male Selasphous hummingbird (most likely a **Rufous Hummingbird**) that has been coming to a feeder since Nov. 22. Later in the day, Shirley goes to Powhatan Secondary and sees the **Eurasian Wigeon**.

**Dec 28:** Mike and Alex Minarik see the **Ross's Goose** reported in Roanoke County.

**Dec 29:** Fred Blystone, Mitchell Byrd and Bill Williams go to see the Selasphous hummingbird in Riverview Plantation.

**Dec 29:** From Jeanette Navia—on my somewhat daily walk-for-exercise (so brisk, usually no time for birds) up Chisel Run road today at dusk, I was surprised to see a Bared Owl sitting in a tree right off the side of the road. She (he?) was in tree maybe fifteen feet off the road, about 15 feet up. I looked at her and she at me, then she

watched a car drive by, looked at me again, watched another car drive by, looked at me again. I tore myself away and walked on.

**Dec 30:** Shirley Devan, Fred Blystone and Alex Minarik go birding—target birds a Black-and-White Warbler and an Orange-crowned Warbler reported at City Point in Hopewell. The Black-and-White was seen but not the other. Additional highlights for the day were an Osprey at Dutch Gap Conservation Area and two Great Horned Owls (one flew across the road in front of us and then into a tree with the second owl) at Shirley Plantation. Sixty species of birds were seen during the day.

**Dec 31:** Shirley Devan writes—this morning as the sun was coming over the neighbor's roof (about 7:38 am), I saw a Brown Thrasher on my suet feeder. I'm guessing he arrived with a flock of American Robins (about 12 or so) who were at the bird baths and in the holly trees. Also had a White-throated Sparrow at the same time.

## **Snowy Owl in Virginia**

**by Shirley Devan**

We had two target birds when we left Williamsburg at 7:00 am December 9 – a Calliope Hummingbird in Lynchburg and a Snowy Owl in Greene County. According to the VSO's Listserve, birders were still seeing these wonders in the Piedmont.

For our trip half way across the state we had maps, notes, snacks, coffee, and pages of detailed directions on where to find each bird. Bill Williams was driving and Alex Minarik and I were eager passengers.

We arrived at the residence in Lynchburg about 11 am where the famous hummer was reported. One other birder from Powhatan had been there about 20 minutes and had seen the tiny visitor. We waited patiently at the corner of the driveway, eyes and scopes focused on the heated hummingbird feeder. Sure enough, the hummer appeared and hovered while it sipped the solution. The Calliope Hummingbird, at three inches the smallest breeding bird in North America, is so tiny that it cannot sit on the feeder's perches and still sip from the ports. The bird spends its summers in the western meadows and streams and usually winters in Mexico.

We watched the bird come to the feeder about 5 times between 11 and noon. Before we left, the homeowner, Mr. Morris, arrived home from an errand and reported that it was 26 degrees the previous night and he had left the feeder out, warmed by 100-watt outdoor spotlight from which the feeder was hanging. He said it was "105 degrees on top of feeder in middle of night; the glass [in the feeder] dis-

sipates a lot of the heat. The nectar is about 42 degrees at the ports." Needless to say, this little Calliope was well taken care of. No one knows how long it will stay in Virginia.

We were not so confident of finding our next target bird, the Snowy Owl. Since we had seen the hummer so quickly, we decided to head north to Charlottesville and then Ruckersville to look for the owl, first reported December 6. The owl had been reported in several locations on a large farm on Route 29 North. What were the chances that we could find this bird in one afternoon on a large farm?



**Photo by Shirley Devan**

We followed other birders' directions, scanning the barns, silos, hay bales, and fields along route 609 east of Route 29. No sign of the white owl, but we did see several other cars with vanity license plates signaling that they were also looking for the owl. Who knew so many people would be looking for the owl on a Tuesday afternoon?

As we drove back toward the intersection with Route 29, we spotted flashing blue lights from a deputy sheriff's car on opposite side of the intersection. We investigated and sure enough, the owl was down low in a swale in the farm field. We saw a photographer slowly approaching the bird across the field.

The sheriff was there to ask the photographer to move his car from the side of the road. The landowner was also there, and she gave us permission to park in her field off the road. By then other cars and birders started arriving. Parking became a problem. Thankfully, Pam, the landowner, was there and directed people where to park.

Finally, we got a look at the bird that was now higher up on the hill. Stunning looks at a magnificent bird sitting in the sun. Alex pulled out her scope so Pam and the deputy could get a good look at the owl. The deputy was incredulous that so many people wanted to see a bird. After he looked at it through the scope, he understood. The deputy decided all

was well and took off. Pam, the owner of the Lamb farm, was pleased to host the birders and the bird.

The birders started discussing where the bird came from, how long it would stay, where would it go? Bill advised the group that the bird, a first year female, was not likely to survive very long in Virginia. Often, young owls that come this far south are starving when they get here and have not yet learned to hunt. So they usually die within a few weeks. This did not gladden our hearts, but the beautiful view of the Snowy Owl in our scopes seemed like an early holiday gift.

We arrived back in Williamsburg about 5:30 after a successful chase across the state for two wildly different birds – a tiny hummer and a magnificent white owl.

We were saddened two weeks later, December 23, to read on the VSO Listserve that “a Snowy Owl was found on the ground on Saturday [December 20] and transported from Greene County to the Virginia Wildlife Center. The report states the owl was ‘terribly emaciated, dehydrated and lice infested, ... and despite efforts, the owl did not survive.’”

## **Texas Birding** **By Shirley Devan**

Five of us in a rental van for four days driving over half of Texas had the makings for a comedy travel movie, and our sixth traveling companion—Sara N. Dippity—made it even more fun. I love it when she comes along!

My husband Steve and I met the Powells—Bird Club members Mike, Susan, and son Alex—in Austin Saturday afternoon, December 13 at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center. Even in December the garden is beautiful and I vow to return in the spring of some future year. Even if Austin is famous for its music, my money is on the wildflower garden and its connection to one of my new heroines – Ladybird Johnson. They have a cell phone audio tour. Dial 512-366-8057. When prompted, key in 111 to hear Ladybird Johnson’s welcome message. Other codes provided info about the different gardens at the Center.

Sunday’s destination was Choke Canyon State Park about 90 minutes south of San Antonio. According to the park’s “Birds of Choke Canyon State Park, “the park is adjacent to Choke Canyon Reservoir on the Frio River and was constructed as a water supply for Corpus Christi by Bureau of Reclamation. The total recreational and wildlife management area is over 12,000 acres. Birdlife here is representative of the brush country of South Texas, which includes mesquite grasslands and thorn shrub. The open waters of the reservoir plus its shallow waters, marshes, and mud flats together with the ripar-

ian woodland along the river provide habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and many woodland species.”



**Photo by Mike Powell**

Crested Caracara

Susan and Mike Powell, who had visited Choke Canyon twice when they lived in San Antonio, had regaled us about the wonderful birds in Choke Canyon, and we were not disappointed. We were almost the only visitors other than the RV campers, so we spotted many birds by the roadside or on the utility wires and poles, including the Audubon’s Oriole, Greater Roadrunner, the Crested Caracara, Harris’s Hawks, and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. The armadillo trundling off into the brush made us cackle with laughter.

With temperatures in the 80s, we rode around with the windows open and walked in short sleeves along the trails. In December, we were surprised to see a nest with two good-size nestling Harris’s Hawks, well tended by two adults perched on utility poles nearby. Around the campground the Vermillion Flycatchers and Great Kiskadee’s showed us their best stuff.

The wetlands and marshes revealed a **very** large colony of White Pelicans and about 30 Sandhill Cranes that we heard long before we found them. One wetland sported a great variety of waterfowl, mostly the same that we see here in the winter except for the lovely Cinnamon Teal. Wading birds included two American Avocets [listed as accidental for the park] plus a Roseate Spoonbill and Common Moorhen. For the day we had over 70 species and I had 16 life birds. I decided I liked Texas!

Monday we headed to Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley hoping to get some of those tropical species that live in both Mexico and Texas.

We checked into our Hampton Inn about 3 pm and asked the front desk clerk for a nearby birding or nature park where we could kill about an hour before dark. We did not have time to drive to the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. We were saving that area for Tuesday. The front desk clerk, Sara N. Dippity, directed us to a place “near my

house that has lots of trails, not too far away, and it's near the river." Sounded great for a short adventure.

Following her directions took us to the Sabal Palm Audubon Center on the Rio Grande River. What a jewel! Owned and operated by the National Audubon Society, this 557-acre sanctuary features a mature Sabal Palm and Texas Ebony jungle as well as a younger forest of native plants growing on the banks of the Rio Grande. The area included trails around ponds and wetlands, complete with three photo blinds, plus a trail down to the Rio Grande. For our immediate delight, the feeding station near the Visitor Center provided us with our first look at Green Jays and Plain Chachalacas – 32 of them fighting over the seed and suet feeders. As we wandered down the trail at 4:40 pm, we heard a Great Horned Owl. The center director hustled out exactly at 5:00 p.m. because the border is tightly patrolled at night and we would be arrested if we remained. So we vowed to return the next day.

Did I mention that our sunny, 80-degree weather on Monday had turned into 45 degrees and drizzle on Tuesday? We piled on as many layers as we could find and headed back to Sabal Palm Tuesday morning. Despite the chilly temperatures we found Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, White-tailed Kite, Crested Caracara, White-winged Dove, Ringed Kingfisher, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Great Kiskadee, White-eyed Vireo, Green Jay, Black-crested Titmouse, Orange-crowned Warbler, and Olive Sparrow. For the two-day visit, we had 35 species. As we prepared to leave, the center director, also named Sara N. Dippity, pointed us to the Frontera Audubon Preserve and Visitor Center in Weslaco, about 30 miles west. So off we went to Weslaco.

One of the highlights of the Frontera Center was the Buff-bellied Hummingbird feeding at the station near the center's entrance. The bird buzzed all around us and then we realized that Steve was wearing a red windbreaker. That hummer almost landed on his shoulder. This little wonder makes a sound like two marbles clicking together. We followed volunteers around the trail to a large feeding station where we saw the now ubiquitous Plain Chachalacas, Green Jays, and Great Kiskadees. Other treasures were Inca Doves, White-winged Doves, Orange-crowned Warblers, an Ovenbird, a Long-billed Thrasher, and a bush with over a dozen Zebra Longwing Butterflies hanging down.

One of the volunteers told me that they average 180 species on their Christmas Bird Count! Yow! Another of the volunteers – Sara N. Dippity – told us we needed to visit Estero Llano Grande Park if we REALLY wanted to see some birds. Only about 15 minutes away, we set off in the cold and

drizzle for the park in the “heart of the subtropical Lower Rio Grande Valley, a four county area with unmatched biodiversity, documenting 512 bird species, over 300 butterfly species and over 1100 species of plants.” [According to the “Birds of Estero Llano Grande State Park.”]

We arrived about 3:30 to find a wonderful gift shop and a large covered deck that looked out on a wetland pond filled with waterfowl and wading birds. Finally out of the drizzle, we set up our scopes and peered through the fog and approaching dusk to find such treasures as Least Grebes, Black-necked Stilts, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, plus Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Reddish Egrets, Snowy Egrets, and Little Blue Herons.

As we warmed up in the Visitor Center and Store, I saw a sign advertising the regular Wednesday morning bird walk at 8:30 am. Yow! Today was Tuesday. The cashier confirmed that the walk would indeed take place the next morning and we vowed to return.

The next morning, the weather was the same even though the forecasters were promising 70 degrees. No matter, we eagerly traveled the 45 minutes to the park for our 8:30 bird walk. Our volunteer leader was a northern birder named Jonathan Gottsche. He and his wife drove their RV trailer down from Massachusetts in November and were living in the park's campground with other snowbirds for the winter.

Despite the weather, our group totaled 9 people including the leader. Jonathan raved about the great weather – fog and mist – because we could actually see the birds without the glaring, blinding sun. We were not convinced as we huddled in our hoods and rain jackets. No one had brought gloves.

Nevertheless, what had been billed as a two-hour walk was still going on at 12:30 when we realized we were starving and that we likely could not find the Clay-colored Robin before we passed out from dehydration. Thanks to Jonathan, the morning's highlights included Sora, Common Pauraque, all three kingfishers including the Green Kingfisher, Tropical Kingbird, Loggerhead Shrike, Sedge Wren, Marsh Wren, Black and White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Lark Sparrow, and Lincoln Sparrow. The total was 70 species.

If Texas birding is this good in December in a cold drizzle, then what is it like in April? I need to come back! After picking up 40 life birds, I decided I loved Texas. (By the way, thanks to Sara N. Dippity, we never made it to Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.)

## **WBC December New Quarter Park Walks**

On the Dec 13th walk in New Quarter Park, the eight birders who joined leader Tom McCary saw a total of 24 species of birds.



**Photo by Sara Lewis**

Front row: Tom McCary, Susie Engle-Hill, Sara Lewis, Margaret Ware. Back Row: Al Brassel, Cathy Millar, Jeanette Navia, Chuck Engle. Missing from photo is Bob Long.

The November 15 field trip to the Colonial Parkway was rained out.

The walk in New Quarter Park on December 27th had 9 birders joining leader Bill Williams. The first Northern Pintail of the season were among the 36 species seen.



Front Row: Cathy Millar, Sara Lewis, Jennifer Burrows, Sue Burrows, Shirley Devan. Back Row: Rosanne Reddin, Paul Marc Leger, Bob Long, Jeanette Navia, Bill Williams

## **VSO's Principles of Birding Ethics**

In the Fall 2008 issue of the Virginia Society of Ornithology newsletter, VSO President David Spears said, "In the Federalist Papers, Hamilton and Madison wrote, 'If men were angels, no government would be necessary.' But men aren't angels, they went on to argue, and therefore we need rules to govern our behavior. What about birders? Are we all angels? Do we need rules?"

President Spears' article continued on this idea of rules for birding and defining ethical birding behavior. The Virginia

Society of Ornithology recently adopted a set of principles for birding ethically. The VSO has been considering the issues related to birding ethics for the past year. These issues have been discussed at length on the VA-Bird listserv, in emails, at VSO board meetings and field trips, in the VSO newsletter and who knows where else. Birding organizations across the country and the world are considering or have enacted similar policies. Many organizations have adopted the American Birding Association's code of birding ethics. The VSO's Principles of Birding Ethics are based on this ABA code. The VSO hopes these are guidelines that birders in Virginia will support and abide by.

There is a link to this set of principles on our club website [www.williamsburgbirdclub.org](http://www.williamsburgbirdclub.org).

## **Great Backyard Bird Count**

**By Fred Blystone**

This year's count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, will be held February 13–16. Anyone can take part by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes, or as long as they wish, on one or more days during this time period, and reporting their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). The data collected helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists of which, 3,788 were from Virginia (ranked 6th). The Williamsburg area was ranked 3rd in the state with 173 checklists (Toano turned in another 9 lists), but was 98 checklists behind number two Virginia Beach which had 271. Lets see if we can move up the list this year. If you do not have computer access, call me at 229-4346 and I can help you participate.



Eurasian Wigeon (on right)

**Photo by Hugh Beard**

## CALENDAR

Thursday, Jan 8	HRBC Monthly Meeting, Lisa Barlow, Wildlife Rehabilitator, 7 PM, Sandy Bottom Nature Park
Saturday, Jan 10	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Parkk, 8 AM, Tom McCary, Leader
Saturday, Jan 17	WBC Field Trip, CBBT Islands, Pre-registration was required for this trip
Sunday, Jan 18	HRBC Bird Walk, Newport News Park, 7 AM, Jane Frigo, Leader
Wednesday, Jan 21	WBC Monthly Meeting, Mike Powell, <i>Birding Galapagos</i> , 7:30 PM, Room 117, Millington Hall (See Front Page)
Saturday, Jan 24	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 AM, Bill Williams, Leader

**January 21—Monthly Meeting**  
**Mike Powell, *Birding Galapagos***