



The Flyer

Newsletter of the Williamsburg Bird Club

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December 2014



Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year from Mr. and Mrs. Claus and the rest of the Bird Club. [The other 11 months of the year the Claus's are known as Gary and Ann Carpenter. Photo by Ken Jenkins and used with his permission.]

President's Corner

By Geoff Giles



Hi All!! Weather-wise, the roller coaster ride continues, dipping from frost on the pumpkin to shirtsleeve afternoons. Nature seems to be dealing with it, though, as the usual suspects seem to be out in good numbers. This morning I had a convention of four particularly well-fed

looking squirrels under my feeder station, actively policing up the seeds that hit the ground from the avian activity above. *Continued on Page 4*

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Wild Birds Unlimited

The WBC receives a 5% rebate on the pre-tax amount our Club members spend at Wild Birds Unlimited in Monticello Marketplace. Remember to let them know you are a member.

Reported Bird Sightings for November 2014

We want to know what you're seeing in your yard and travels. Please share with Club members by sending your sightings to Judy Jones, Jjones184@cox.net, 229-8297, or Shirley Devan, 813-1322, sedevan52@cox.net

October 2014: John and Marilyn Adair traveled to Germany, the Baltics, and Russia. Though it wasn't a birding trip, we carried our binoculars everywhere and were always on the lookout for birds. Some species we spotted were Lapwing, Stonechat, Whinchat, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Great Tit, Hooded Crow, and Jackdaw. We saw several species of geese: Egyptian, Bar-headed, Greylag, and Barnacle.

November 6: Ruth Beck, Brian Taber, Bill Williams, Alex Minarik, Inge Curtis, and George and Virginia Boyles conduct their regular survey at Craney Island in Portsmouth. They tally 70 species. Highlights include 839 Northern Shovelers, 489 Green-winged Teal, 3 Redheads, 8 Horned Grebes, 1 Eared Grebe, 6 Northern Harriers, 1 Caspian Tern, and 1 Peregrine Falcon.

November 10: Lois Leeth in St. Augustine, FL reports: "The Black Brandt and companion were back by the lake; 2 Ospreys; 16 Wood Storks; 4 Roseate Spoonbills; 20 White Ibis; 3 Great Egrets; 2 Pied-bill Grebes; 6 Mallards."

November 12: Patti Rababate reports on her trip to Buffalo Lake near Greensboro, NC. "We saw the typical Northern Cardinals, Carolina Chickadees, and a couple of Goldfinches. But then, I was delighted to see a Belted Kingfisher diving for fish and a flock of about 15 Wood Ducks enjoying the peaceful lake water."

November 13: Cynthia Long reports quite a few Eastern Bluebirds eating pokeberries in her yard.

November 13: Bill Williams discovers at least three male Brewer's Blackbirds plus a couple of female Rusty Blackbirds at Drummond's Field/Mainland Farm. The same date he finds a Marsh Wren at Jamestown Island.

November 14: Virginia Boyles reports that she and George "were driving into the Mariner's Museum from Warwick this morning, and were greeted by 22 Great Egrets lining the banks of the cove on the left that opens into Lake Maury. Guess they were seeking cover beside the 3 Great Blue Herons from the sudden arctic blast. Didn't find Buffleheads or Hooded Mergansers on the Kettle Pond, however. Just trucks dumping rocks to stabilize the shoreline of the James River."

November 14: Geoff Giles and Jan Lockwood report three Buffleheads, three Brown Pelicans, and seven Northern Gannets over the York River off Yorktown.

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TAKE NOTE!

December 14 Christmas Bird Count

One of the most important dates in our Club's birding year! We want more than 100 counters again this year. That means YOU – out in the field with a team OR counting your backyard birds and reporting to Bill Williams [your neighborhood location and your birds]! Questions – contact Bill at 229-1124 or billwilliams154@gmail.com

January 1 Greensprings Board Walk Bird Show

Join Shirley Devan New Year's Day – Thursday, January 1, 2015 – at the Greensprings Trail Boardwalk for the 10th Annual "New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show." We'll meet on the "old" boardwalk over the old beaver pond from 1–3 pm (not the Virginia Capitol Trail boardwalk.)

Park in the lot at the end of Eagle Way, beyond Jamestown High School. Come as you are; bring visiting family, friends and children; come early, stay late or just drop by. Celebrate the New Year with a birding adventure close to home with birding friends. Remember, every bird is a year bird on New Year's Day! Hope to see you there.

Feed the Bird(ers)!

There is still time to sign up to help with refreshments for bird club meetings! For our January 21 meeting, we need one more person to work with Shirley Devan on refreshments. Plus, there are openings for March 18, April 15, and May 20. If you can help with any of these dates, please contact Ruth Gordon at (757) 208-0757, or email her at ruthkagordon@gmail.com

VA Society of Ornithology Upcoming Events

Annual Outer Banks Field Trip: Feb 6 – 8, 2015. Check the VSO web site for details: <http://www.virginiabirds.net/index.html>

VSO Annual Meeting at Wintergreen, VA: May 8 – 10, 2015. Keynote speaker will be Scott Weidensaul, noted author, birder, scientist, and researcher. Celebrate Mother's Day at Wintergreen! Save the date and look for more info in spring at: <http://www.virginiabirds.net>

2015 Officers elected at November meeting

At the November 19 Club meeting, members elected officers for 2015:

President: Geoff Giles

Vice President, Programs: Cheryl Jacobson

Co-Vice Presidents, The Flyer: Shirley Devan and Judy Jones

Treasurer: Ann Carpenter

Secretary: Catherine Millar

Member-at-Large: Jan Lockwood

Member-at-Large: Jeanette Navia

So many THANKS to Fred Blystone who edited the Club's newsletter since January 2008! Fred will still be instrumental in getting the hard copies of the newsletter printed, stamped, and transported to the Post Office.

We are grateful to returning Board members and Committee Chairs for their dedicated volunteer efforts to keep the Club running!

Pay Your 2015 Dues!

Now is the time to pay your dues for 2015. Use the renewal form inside this newsletter. We hope you will add something extra to your check to support our Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships (2 in 2015), our Ruth Beck and Bill Sheehan Ornithology Research Grants to Biology Graduate Students (3 in 2015), and the feeder stations at the Child Development Resources campus. Membership dues alone do not support these 6 scholarships. We can't do it without you!!

2015 Nature Camp Scholarship Applications Now Available

The Williamsburg Bird Club is pleased to offer TWO full tuition scholarships – The Bill Williams Nature Camp Scholarships – for a two-week summer program at Nature Camp in Vesuvius, Virginia, for 5th through 12th graders. This year each scholarship is worth \$850. Applications, which should be postmarked by January 14, 2015, are available to download from our Club's web site: <http://williamsburgbirdclub.org/index.php/2013-bill-williams-nature-camp-scholarship>

President's Corner, continued from page 1

They showed once more that the baffle on my feeder pole from Wild Birds Unlimited really does keep the furry rascals from cleaning out the feeder, as only one squirrel tried his luck shinnying up the pole. He was rewarded with a slide down the pole and landing on his bushy tail after being baffled by the baffle!!

Bird-wise, no big surprises at my yard. I'm glad to see the male hairy woodpecker is a regular at my place again this winter, since he brought his whole family around eventually last year. Also nice to see the pine warblers back at the feeder, as the bright yellow male really outshines the dull goldfinches in their winter duds. I do have an unusual number of bluebirds in the yard and coming to the feeder for sunflower chips. The male is already stunning in his plumage! The bluebirds regularly perch on my bluebird box and occasionally go inside, but I think for the moment they are inspecting to make sure it is a safe place to weather winter storms as opposed to a spot for nesting. Oh yes, and my favorite winter resident, a male yellow-bellied sapsucker has once again begun to refresh his sap wells in the holly tree just outside my window. This has not escaped the attention of a ruby-crowned kinglet and a squirrel who regularly raid his sap wells when he is not around.

Hope you are dusting off your abacus and getting ready for the Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 14. One goosey-goose, two goosey-goose, three goosey-goose, and so on and so forth.... At some point I always start to feel like the Count on Sesame Street when tallying the more numerous species, but there are always some great surprises during the count too. Some birds we are surprised to see and hear, and others we are surprised not to encounter, are always a big part of the count. For all of us who love our birds and nature, and enjoy sharing it with friends, the count is a highlight of the birding year. Given its importance for conservation, in moving us away from the bad old days of blasting a heap of everything that flies out of the sky, to admiring or even photographing our beautiful feathered friends, in order to prove what we have seen, this event deserves our enthusiastic support. Even if it is just to ensure that your "usual suspects" at your feeder are counted this year, we hope that you will be in touch with Bill Williams, our count guru, and join us!!

After enjoying the holidays ahead, we have some special events planned. Following a presentation on the marsh sparrows of the Eastern Shore at our January 21 WBC meeting, we will offer a trip to the field to encounter those reclusive species in the wild. For those interested in going to a salt marsh January 24, we will have the unique opportunity to travel to the Shore and assist a talented field biologist in finding and banding some of those birds in their element. This is part of ongoing research, and we will have the chance to observe it first hand. Very, very cool – so dress warmly!!

Another chance to field your snug winter outfits (and cameras) will come in late January, when we take to the Bay on our annual Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel birding by boat trip. Will we be surrounded again by a flock of feeding razorbills like last year? Or maybe by humpbacked whales like the two years previous? The bay ducks and sea ducks are already pouring in and the gannets are already active around the CBBT, so the birds we love to see up close should be ready for us. Seems like we always have a pleasant surprise or two when we get out on the Bay, so let's see what this year brings us. Details of the trip and sign-up instructions will be going out to our members in about a week. This is a super trip and always fills up, so if you plan to join us get aboard early!!

In the meantime, we wish all our birding friends very peaceful and happy holidays with family and friends! May the bluebird of happiness snuggle up in your yard and may the year ahead bring us all sunshine and many chances to enjoy it with friends!!!

November 15 Field Trip to Beaverdam Park, Gloucester County

Twelve participants plus leaders George and Rosemarie Harris enjoyed a relatively mild day at Beaverdam Park in Gloucester County Saturday, November 15. Thank you, George and Rosemarie, for showing off your "patch!"

The winter ducks had arrived and the 14 participants counted them all! A total of 38 species including 15 Bufflehead, 106 Ruddy Ducks, 54 Pied-billed Grebes, and 250 American Coots! Not to be outdone, the Yellow-rumped Warblers clocked in at 104. Marilyn and John Adair, Virginia and George Boyles, Geoff Giles, Jan Lockwood, Judy Remsberg, and Christina and David Wilcox were joined by three members of the W&M Bird Club – Matt Anthony, Erin Chapman, and Nick Newberry. *See photos by George Boyles on page 8.*

Reported Bird Sightings for November 2014, continued

November 16: Dan Cristol reports a “first of the year” Fox Sparrow at his feeders in Rolling Woods.

November 16: Shirley Devan reports a “first of the year” Brown Creeper in her yard. Later in the day she drives right by a Peregrine Falcon perched on the railing at eye level on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

November 27: Lee Schuster reports 5 Purple Finches at her feeders – 2 males and 3 females.

November 28: Shirley Devan reports the most birds at her feeders so far this fall: 26 American Goldfinches and 6 Dark-eyed Juncos, the first this year. Total of 12 species for Project FeederWatch.

November 29: Shirley Devan spots a female Purple Finch at her feeder – first ever! A walk around Colonial Heritage turns up 20 species with the highlight being the American Kestrel patrolling the power line cut.

A November to Remember...or The Grace from Fall

By Bill Williams

A Greater White-fronted Goose, initially discovered at Mainland Farm October 26, was present there most mornings through Thanksgiving Day, November 27. It was also seen once at Jamestown Island (October 26) and at Mill Creek off the Colonial Parkway November 18. Many, many folks were able to see and photograph this bird. This was the second record for James City County and was the earliest, by one day, fall season date for the Colonial Historic Triangle (CHT).

A Snow Goose was a one-and-done visitor to Mainland Farm on November 18. It was found by William and Mary Bird Club members Matt Anthony, Erin Chapman and Nick Newberry.

A White-winged Scoter was at Jamestown Island November 26.

Quite the surprise was an American Avocet that hung out with Greater Yellowlegs and Ring-billed Gulls on the mud flats in the mouth of Gordon’s Creek, off the Chickahominy River, November 21-23. Those flats are easily scanned from Chickahominy Riverfront Park. Brian Taber saw it November 22. Shirley Devan got pictures on the 23rd.

A Least Sandpiper at Mainland Farm November 18 was the first November CHT record for this species, leaving only January without a documented local occurrence.

Four days later, November 22, a second-cycle (going through its second molt cycle) Glaucous Gull at Jamestown Island also proved to be a CHT first November record.

On November 7 while patrolling Mainland Farm for the Greater White-fronted Goose, Mitchell Byrd watched an immature female Peregrine Falcon loop the fields several times.

Facebook connected us with photographer Nanc Galliher who took a picture of a gorgeous Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at the Yorktown Battlefields November 10. This was the CHT’s fourth record, the second this year!!! and the first for York County.

For a third consecutive fall an Orange-crowned Warbler returned to Jeanette Navia’s Chisel Run feeder, this time on November 6.

Not to be out-warblered Jan Lockwood had a Yellow-throated Warbler enjoying her Queens Lake feeder station through November 17, providing a first CHT November record. That species has now been recorded in the CHT in every month of the year.

After finding the Greater White-fronted Goose and the Peregrine Falcon at Mainland Farm on November 7 Mitchell Byrd spied a Vesper Sparrow foraging with a group of Savannah Sparrows.

Sadly the CHT’s 12th Painted Bunting record was one that suffered the worst possible window collision outcome November 18 at William and Mary.

Arlene and Bill Williams’ male Western Tanager returned to Settlers’ Mill November 10, the exact same date it was first seen there in 2013. One, or the same one, has been visiting their feeder annually since January 2009!!!

Three male Brewer’s Blackbirds were at Mainland Farm November 13 establishing the CHT’s sixth local record for that species.

Nancy Barnhart closed a long standing records gap finding the CHT's first documented October-date Baltimore Oriole, this one on Jamestown Island October 10. Then on October 25 Jan Lockwood and other members of the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists watched at least eleven Baltimore Orioles exit property off Menzel's Road. Not only was this a second CHT October record, it was a new single-site peak count for any date!!! But Nancy Barnhart wasn't done yet. She photographed a beautiful young male Baltimore Oriole at York River State Park November 20. Two days earlier, Gale Treiber documented a stunning male at his Ford's Colony home, the sixth consecutive year one has been present.

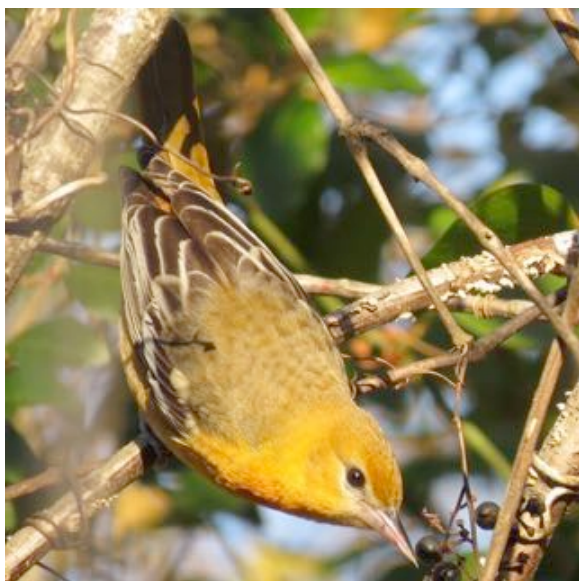
And finally both Purple Finches and Pine Siskins have been seen and heard locally in November, raising hopes we will have these and others noted above for the December 14 Christmas Bird Count.



Greater-white Fronted Goose by Jim Easton, November 9



American Avocet (digiscoped) by Shirley Devan, November 23



Baltimore Oriole by Nancy Barnhart November 20



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher by Nanc Galliber November 10

November Bird Walks at New Quarter Park

November 8: This Saturday morning was one of the most beautiful fall mornings we have spent at New Quarter Park. Many thanks to Hugh Beard for leading us to our favorite spots and sharing his knowledge of the birds and woods with us. The group recorded 31 species — including low flyover of an adult Bald Eagle while we gazed up from the floating dock! Here's the group photo — everyone one is smiling!



Seated: Melissa Williams, Barb Bucklin, Cathy Millar, Marilyn Adair, Virginia Boyles, Cynthia Long, Shirley Devan

Standing: Maud Ann Wilson, Graham Rose, Lynda Sharrett, Jan Lockwood, Joe Fridgen, Bill Boeh, Bob Long, Hugh Beard, George Boyles.

November 22: 23 degrees in November is pretty unusual but the low temps did not deter 9 hearty, warm-blooded birders who enjoyed a beautiful morning of birding at New Quarter Park. Little to no breeze saved us! Many thanks to Bill Williams who led us around searching for the mysteriously missing Yellow-rumped Warblers, Dark-eyed Juncos, and White-throated Sparrows. Where were they? Still snug in their beds, like the raccoon snoozing in the tree near the path! The group spotted 29 species.



Participants in November 22 Bird Walk at New Quarter Park:

Seated: Betty Peterson, Jan Lockwood, Virginia Boyles, Shirley Devan

Standing: Joe Fridgen, Cheryl Jacobson, Joe Beene, George Boyles, Bill Williams

December Bird Walks at New Quarter Park will be December 13 (8 am with leader Andy Hawkins) and December 27 (7 am with leader Bill Williams). All are welcome!

Calendar

Saturday, December 13	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am.
Sunday, December 14	Williamsburg's Audubon Christmas Bird Count!
Sunday, December 14	HRBC Bird Walk at Newport News Park, 7 am. Jane Frigo, Leader
Saturday, December 20	Newport News Audubon Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, December 27	WBC Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 7 am. Bill Williams, Leader
Thursday, January 1	New Year's Day Boardwalk Bird Show, 1 – 3 pm, Greensprings Trail
Saturday, January 10	Williamsburg Bird Club (WBC) Bird Walk, New Quarter Park, 8 am.

Photos from November 15 Field Trip to Beaverdam Park in Gloucester, VA



Left to right: Field trip leaders George and Rosemarie Harris, Virginia Boyles, and John Adair (behind binoculars). Both photos by George Boyles.



Left to right: Erin Chapman, Nick Newberry (behind the spotting scope) and Geoff Giles (also behind the spotting scope).