

December 1978



THE WILLIAMSBURG FLIER

Since December is such a busy month, and because our regular meeting date is so close to the holidays, we will not be having a meeting this month. Instead, all of our energies will be concentrated on the Williamsburg Christmas Count which will be held Sunday, Dec. 17. We will assemble at the Information Center parking lot at 7:00 A.M. for area assignments and will count until 4:30 P.M. At 4:30 we will meet in the Millington Hall conference room for the day's tally. If you cannot help for the whole day, any time that you can put in will be of great help. This includes just taking note of what comes to your feeder. And please don't feel like you can't help because you may not be able to identify a lot of birds; someone will be able to identify the birds; but we need eyes to spot the birds, and the more people we have watching, the more we can count. If you cannot get out during the day but you want to contribute, we need refreshments (cookies, cakes, drinks, etc.) at 4:30 when we compile our lists. Areas to be covered for the count include:

- Hog Island
- Carter's Grove
- Cheatham
- Skimino
- Jamestown Island
- College Woods
- Middle Plantation
- Jolly's Pond

We hope that all club members will participate in some capacity since this will take the place of our regular meeting, and since the information is so important. If you have any questions or can bring refreshments, please contact Bill Williams (229-0098), Ruth Beck (229-3837) or Susan Sturm (229-1906) and let them know.

Reminder - Club dues will be due in January. In spite of inflation and the cost of almost everything going up, our dues will remain the same as last year. Rates are \$3 for students, \$5 for individuals, and \$7.50 for families.

Hampton Roads Bird Club will hold their Christmas Count on Saturday Dec. 16 from 6:45 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. Please assemble at the Family Fish House at Sinclair Circle in Hampton for your area assignment. The tally will be held at 4:00 P.M. at the home of Mike and Dorothy Mitchell (596 Harpersville Rd. in Newport News).

Alice Springe and Barbara Ema are our co-chairpersons for our Local Exhibits Committee. They have set up a display on bird feeders which can be found on the fourth floor (green house) of Millington Hall.

Now that fall migration is over and the weather is getting wintery, most of us will be doing a great deal of our birding from the sanctuary of our homes as we watch our feeders. The star attractions of course are the various winter finches. Already Alice Springle has purple finches (since Nov. 22). As promised last month we are including an article on attracting birds to your feeders. The article is taken from an article by George Harrison which appeared in the Dec.-Jan. copy of National Wildlife Magazine.

1. Feed the birds what they want. This includes seed mixtures containing cracked corn, sunflower seed, millet, milo, and wheat. These mixtures can be bought from grocery and feed stores in most any area.
2. Feed selectively. If you wish to discourage starlings, house sparrows, and pigeons, rely heavily on sunflower seeds.
3. Experiment with new foods. For example, thistle seed is an import which has been used as canary food. Only in the last 5 years has it caught on as a food for wild birds.
4. Use beef suet. This dry, hard fat is available from almost any butcher and is most effective in attracting woodpeckers. It supplies a high energy fat that is difficult for birds to find in the wild. Put it in an onion bag or a commercial suet feeder and hang it against a tree trunk or from a limb.
5. Consider what you can mix up yourself. Migrating warblers, orioles, and thrushes are particularly fond of a grapefruit or orange rind filled with fresh fruit or jello. Also try peanuts (in or out of the shell), dry dog food, peanut butter, or a mixture of peanut butter, suet and corn meal.
6. Use a variety of feeders. There are 4 feeding niches to be filled at any feeding station: ground level, tabletop, hanging, and tree trunk. Sparrows, doves, quail, juncos, and towhees prefer the ground. Try putting seed in a split log with a cavity or trough for these birds. A tray works well for table top feeders; cardinals, finches, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, etc. will be attracted to tabletop and hanging feeders. Tree trunk feeders are mostly for suet or bird cakes and are designed to attract woodpeckers and other insect eaters.
7. Place feeders in the right locations. Because some birds won't fly directly to a feeder in the open, move the feeder near small trees or bushes so they can survey the area for danger.
8. Once you start feeding, don't stop. After birds know they can rely on you, they will visit the feeder on a regular basis. But if you abruptly stop feeding during bad weather, you may lose them for the rest of the winter. Ask a neighbor to fill your feeders if you're going to be away for more than a couple days.
9. Learn to cope with unwanted wildlife. Squirrels eat more than their share of food, scare birds away, and sometimes destroy feeders. The fool-proof squirrel baffle is yet to be invented, but there are a number of available devices that may help. An example is the weighted perch which would allow only the lightest birds to feed.
10. Keep a log. Record all species that visit your feeders and keep track of the earliest arrivals and the latest departures for your area. Year to year comparisons of such records are fascinating and informative.