



THE WILLIAMSBURG FLIER  
February, 1979

The February meeting of the Williamsburg Bird Club will be held Wednesday, Feb. 21, at 7:30 P.M. in Millington Hall. Our speakers for this month will be club members Mike and Dorothy Mitchell, who will present a slide program on the flora and fauna of Australia. The Mitchells spent last October "down under", and they have promised us a most informative program. Nothing could be better for a case of the mid-winter blues than to come to bird club and view Australia's exotic bird life.

Our field trip for this month will be a trip to Cheatham Annex, Saturday, Feb. 24. Please assemble by 8:00 A.M. in the Information Center parking lot. The birding possibilities include waterfowl, pheasants, turkeys, and maybe even a great-horned owl.

We have a new display on show on the fourth floor of Millington Hall, and we hope everyone will take a little extra time to view it. Alice Sprunge and Barbara Ema have a display of bird books (which were loaned by Scribner's Book Store) that is quite informative. Many club members have asked about various books, and this would be a good opportunity to learn which books would be best for your own particular interests.

Have you paid your dues? If not, please do so as soon as possible. Mailing costs are quite high now, and if we have not heard from you by the time the next newsletter comes out, we will have to drop you from the mailing list.

We are starting a collection of bird pictures for educational purposes; if you have any old pictures from magazines, newspapers, etc., please bring them to the meeting.

Beginning this month and to be held at the end of the regular meeting, there will be a 30 minute workshop for those who wish to stay. These mini-workshops are designed to help you with bird identification. Each month we will study a different bird family and we will try to include background information in each newsletter. This month we will be looking at the family "Picidae" - Woodpeckers.

The family Picidae consists of some 209 living species of wrynecks, piculets, and woodpeckers. Of these 179 species are true woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are found in the wooded areas of all continents and large islands with the exception of Australia, Madagascar, New Guinea, and New Zealand. They range in size from 3.5 to 22 inches in length. Wings are long and pointed; tail feathers are pointed and usually stiff. Legs are short and there are 3 or 4 toes with long, curved claws. The bill is chisel-like, strong, and pointed. Colors are varied - black and white, browns, greens, with red or yellow head markings; some streaked, spotted, barred; some are crested. Sexes are usually unlike.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of these birds is the long protrusible tongue. Species that feed on ants, such as the common flicker, can extend their tongues 2 inches beyond the bill. The tongue of the flicker has small barbs at the tip and is coated with a sticky saliva. Tongues of other species have sharp, horny tips for spearing wood-boring larvae and those of sapsuckers have brush-like tips for collecting sap.

Both sexes excavate the nest cavity, but the males do most of the work. Clutches vary from 3-5 white eggs which hatch in 12-17 days. Both parents take turns in incubating and feeding the young. This next Wed. evening we will be taking a closer look at the more common species of woodpecker we have in Va.

\*\*\* HELP WANTED \*\*\*

The club desperately needs access to your personal bird records, especially for 1977, 1978, and the current year. Even for most common species, we need your records to establish the birds' presence, numbers, and nesting habits throughout our area.

We need: species name; date(s) observed; estimated number of individual birds; location, and whether in Williamsburg, James City or York Counties.

We especially seek first and last dates for migrating birds and winter and summer residents; all observations of hawks, owls, woodpeckers, nuthatches, creepers, pheasants, etc. But please don't limit it to these. Nesting and fledging data will also be welcome.

Please give, send, or telephone your inputs to your friendly Records Chairman, Bill Sheehan - at 104 Oak Road; Tel: 220-2122.

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The last report from the Eagle Survey recorded 12 eagles from Caladon State Park, 9 on the James River, and 11 on the Chickahominy.

Ruth Beck has been caring for an injured broad-winged hawk (it was probably struck by another hawk) and an injured screech owl (it was probably hit by a car) for the past few days. The broad-winged hawk is unusual because they don't normally winter here. Another has been reported in the VIMS area this winter. Ruth also reports sighting a black and white warbler in Newport News City Park Jan. 18.

Have you been feeding the birds an extra measure during this cold snowy weather we've been having? And be sure and keep a list of your feeding birds for Bill.



"Nothing but bills, bills, bills!"