

WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

JUNE 1980

BUSINESS

The main business is that there isn't any business. As has been the practice over recent years our regular monthly meetings have ceased for the months of June, July and August. So if you show up at Millington Hall at the regular monthly meeting day you'll be entertained by the all-night mockingbird and robin duet and that's all.

We will have a field trip this month and every month throughout the summer. For June we are going to head to Grandview Beach in Hampton. The major attractions here include the elusive and beautiful least bittern, common gallinules, a colony of least terns, piping plovers, seaside sparrows and numerous long-billed marsh wrens. Of course, there are always royal, common, and Forster's terns available in June as well as a scattering of shorebirds such as turnstones, sanderlings, willets, and an occasional oystercatcher. You'll find this a great trip. Remember we leave from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center parking lot at 7:00 AM, Saturday June 21. Plan on being home around 1:00 PM. Definitely bring some snacks and a cold drink or two. June on the beach makes those a necessity.

Just in case you had not marked them down earlier here are the dates and locations for the July and August field trips: July 19 - Lake Matoaka; August 23 - Craney Island.

At our recent May meeting we agreed to allocate fifty dollars each for operating funds for our Bluebird and Purple Martin Committees. The local martins must have anticipated this because a group of them moved into San Hart's martin motel. This is the first time our Purple Martin Committee Chairman has had some of his own.

Now is the busy time of the year for San nad his birds. There are young to be banded and houses to be monitored. Please give him a call if there's any time you can spare to help him.

Our Bluebird Committee reported that many of the birds had already raised one brood, and that the committee was desperately in need of folks to look after the houses on a once-a-week basis. We would hope that community groups might be informed of our project and adopt a box. Our Bluebird Chairperson, Jewel Thomas, can be reached at the Biology Department (253-4458) at William and Mary.

BIRDS

Since about mid - May the birding activity has slowed considerably. Perhaps the bird-of-the-season arrived June 1 at Cheatham. On that date a flycatcher

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singing "whip-three-beers" from the top of a dead loblolly pine was carefully observed. It's dusky flanks and chunky body coupled with this distinctive call identified it immediately as an olive-sided flycatcher. This species is considered rare in Virginia especially on the coastal plain and constitutes our first local record.

Some of the highlights of May included: twenty-four cattle egrets at Jamestown Island on May 7. These were well described by Mrs. Anne Smith. Cedar waxwings held on until the last day of May at Lafayette High School. In case anyone would like to see red-headed woodpeckers "up-close-and-personal" there's a very active pair nesting in the pine stand in front of Lafayette. A grasshopper sparrow was seen singing at the Williamsburg Airport on May 14. The bobolink flight seemed to peak by the third week in May. Hundreds of these beautiful birds could be seen at St. George's and several flocks occupied the fields near the water tower on Longhill Road. Also on May 14 both Swainson's and grey-cheeked thrushes were heard singing on Jamestown Island as was one chuck-wills-widow. Rose-breasted grosbeaks were last noted on May 19 in York County. On May 18 one Magnolia warbler and one very unusual bay-breasted warbler were seen and heard at Queen's Lake.

Ruth Beck recently treated Betty Williams and Alice Springe to a tour of the red-cockaded woodpecker nesting areas on the south side of the James. The group was rewarded by seeing at least six individuals of this endangered species. As birds go this "pecker" is pretty picky. They nest only in loblolly long-leaf pine trees that are about forty years old and have been infected by the red-heart fungus. So, not only are pine stands a prerequisite, but there must be old trees available in them. Since pines are very marketable the stability of continuous nesting areas for the red-cockaded is flimsy at best.

Well everybody else would use their hummingbird feeders for the proper function. Not Bill Sheehan. His hummingbird feeder feeds a downy woodpecker! At first our disbelieving records chairman figured the downy was picking off ants attracted to the sugar. But after careful scrutiny it was clear the little fellow was indeed taking the hummer's chow.

Speaking of records, Bill reports that he has documented approximately 265 species of avifauna for our area. Certainly this is as rich a list as can be found anywhere.

Young birds are popping up all over. Fledgling cardinals, robins, jays, titmice, and chickadees are bouncing and begging in many localities. Wood duck chicks are present on the lakes and streams, and young cowbirds have already been observed pleading with surrogate cardinals for food. Chances are many of these species will attempt second broods. Ruth has nest record cards for those of you who may have a nest that can be observed and noted.

Interested in a summer pelagic trip? There are several upcoming out of Oden's Dock at Hatteras, North Carolina. These trips cost \$35.00 per person for a full day of petrels, shearwaters, and possible rarities. The dates are August 17, 30 and 31, and October 12. For further information call Bill Williams (229-0098).

ASK OWL

About black skimmers: since this species feeds mainly at dusk or at night they have vertical slit pupils to protect their eyes by day.