

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

September 1980

And we are off in a blinding flurry of feathered fowl to another season of fabulously informative bird-brainery. That's right, my little chickadees, September 17, 1980 we will reconvene at 7:30 p.m. at Millington Hall (room 117) on the William and Mary Campus. Dr. Jack Willis of the college's English Department will enlighten us about the "Bird of Modern Poetry". There's no rhyme or reason why you shouldn't be there to partake of his expertise! Upcoming plans include the bird seed sale and the annual Christmas bird census, as well as a host of super field trips and smashing monthly programs. It is hoped we'll pack the meeting room and offer everyone what enchants them the most about the Aves.

Quite a pack of folks assembled on August 23 for the trip to Craney Island. After literally weeks of oppressing heat the day was pleasantly warm and certainly worthwhile bird-wise. The trip actually attracted guests from as far away as Richmond and White Stone and birds from all over North America. Up close and personal looks were had of stilt sandpipers, western and semipalmated sandpipers, yellowlegs, many gulls, terns and skimmers and several species of waterfowl. Even a kingfisher was available at Alice Sprunge's request. Individual highlights included an almost tame Wilson's phalarope and a cooperative glossy ibis. Several clapper rails were scoped out as they were forced to the edge of the marsh by an extremely high tide. Numerous avocets were present in the open water of the island swishing their upturned bills to and fro gleaning insect larvae. A single pectoral sandpiper passed inspection by everyone.

The springtime birding excitement is presently going full tilt in reverse. All those great non-residents we spend the cold winter months anticipating during their northward flight to breeding grounds are steadily making the southward trek to their winter quarters. The shorebirds begin their move in July. Kingbirds and flycatchers as well as nighthawks make their big move by late August, as do the gulls and terns. Herons, ibis and egrets show an initial northward dispersion following their breeding season and then regroup by September to course southward. Raptors and warblers gear-up throughout the ninth month peaking by mid-October at which time the finches and waterfowl take the spotlight.

Locally the aforementioned activity has already produced some fine birding. The dry weather has exposed an extensive mud flat at the end of the lake at Newport News Park. This has attracted a spectacular array of shorebirds, herons, egrets, ibis and swallows since mid-July. An early Cooper's hawk was observed August 16 off the Chickahominy River. August 20 brought the first nighthawk around Dick Hines' house off Olde Towne Road. Glossy Ibis have been seen near Jamestown Island recently as well as a single sharp-shinned hawk and numerous bobolinks. The cool snaps of September 6 and 8 brought the following selection of warblers to Queen's Lake; many redstarts, Magnolia, Tennessee, black and white, parula, yellow-throated, black-throated, Wilson's, yellow and northern waterthrush. Also present were northern orioles. Best of all is the thought that it's only the beginning.

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Hawk watchers will assemble throughout the state September 13, 14 and 20, 21 at their favorite lookouts to conduct the annual raptor migration counts. Should you be interested let Bill Williams know. Many of us will continue to count throughout the fall especially at Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore. The Kiptopeke banding operation got underway Labor Day weekend and will remain open through mid-October. On a good flight day there is literally no better place to be for experiencing the sheer magnitude of bird migration. The scene will overwhelm you and the variety of birds will test your skills rewardingly. If you'd like to know more about how to get to Kiptopeke let Ruth Beck, Tom Armour or Bill know.

ASK OWL

The phalarope is a cut out of the recent ERA movement. The female of the species assumes the bright plumages normally ascribed to males in other avian species. Once she woos her gentleman and produces her eggs, she scrams, leaving pop to tend house and the chicks. Move over, Gloria!