

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

JULY 1981

Despite the fact the bird club is not meeting this month or in August, don't get the notion we are on strike. Not by a long shot. Baseball players, air traffic controllers and other contract disputers have nothing on us. Their walkouts take on the appearance of being for the birds, and by golly we'll take 'em up on that. Right?!

Just to prove we are at work, I'll remind you of our July field trip to Craney Island on Saturday, July 25. This trip will commence as usual from the south parking lot of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center at 7 a.m. It takes approximately one hour to caravan to Craney Island in Portsmouth. Once there we can look forward to a shorebird show that can be exceptional. Regularly found there in July include western, semipalmated, stilt, least, spotted, pectoral and white-rumped sandpipers, avocets, dunlin, greater and lesser yellowlegs, Wilson's phalarope, all terns, gulls and black skimmers. Rarities this time of the fall migration have included curlew sandpipers, golden plover and buff-breasted sandpiper. Numerous herons, egrets and ibis are usually available as are least bitterns and several species of waterfowl. Horned larks nest in the area also. If it's low tide we should be able to scope out a clapper rail or two. This has been a very popular excursion over the years for obvious birdy reasons. Plan on bringing drinks and munchies. We should be homeward bound by noon.

June's field experience to Grandview Beach in Hampton had five hardy participants. The group was treated to a least bittern and piping plovers not to mention the thrill of being in and around a very active least tern colony.

Jewel Thomas has done it folks! Our mini-bluebird trail at the Williamsburg Country Club has produced! Jewel and Ruth and Michael Beck found five active nests there in late June. One had five eggs in it and another had already produced one batch of fledglings. Ruth was able to band eleven baby bluebirds. Two additional boxes are the condos for Carolina wrens. Come on Carter's Grove, you can do it!

Dick Hines is better known to the outdoors as a bass fisherman, but lately he's become quite a birder. On June 14 while supposedly competing in a bass tournament on the Chickahominy River he saw no less than five bitterns in the marsh area called Neyses Bay on Gordon's Creek. This provides our first June record for the species and makes the possibility of local breeding seem quite probable. To top this, Dick was in Denbigh the other day and had the shock of his life when he looked up to see a very large parrot fly by! Dick works for the phone company. You don't suppose he's got a bad connection, do you? Ding-a-ling!

Cynthia Long called to say she's nursing a baby bird whose identity is not quite clear at this point. It's that time of year when numerous nestlings become orphaned by the efforts of cats, children or competitive birds. Adopting a chick is a twenty-four hour-a-day endeavor. These little rascals are in a stage of very rapid growth and are constantly on the feed. They need protein and plenty of attention. Good luck, if you become a surrogate parent.

Purple martins are well in to their nesting and young are almost ready to be banded. This means Sam Hart could use your help. Sam and Ruth generally try to attend to the banding during the morning and evening hours to avoid the heat. They don't stay out very long. See if you can't fit an hour or two in to help out.

As of mid-June a pine siskin continued to occupy the Beck's feeder. By all measures this dude should be far north of here looking for a spouse. We hope the little tourist finds the colonial atmosphere during summer agreeable.

Recent colonial breeding bird surveys revealed lower than normal numbers of gull-billed terns and Wilson's and piping plovers. Except for the herons, egrets and ibis and royal terns all species were well behind the nesting schedule of the two previous seasons. This can be attributed to a very severe flood tide in early June that wiped out initial nesting efforts this summer. During the past two nesting seasons there were no wash outs. Provided there are no harsh weather or tidal events in the nest several weeks production of young for the gulls, terns and skimmers of the Virginia Barrier Islands should be quite good. White ibis were noted in heronries on Hog and Fisherman Island. A single pair of Caspian terns with a chick was found for the eighth consecutive season. Goody birds in the area included two late common loons, 14 marbled godwits, a black tern, a lesser black-backed gull (very unusual for summer), five white-rumped sandpipers and several whimbrel. A nesting colony of better than 13,000 laughing gulls on Wreck Island was awesomely impressive.

For the Birds

My feeder is loaded with sparrows,
And starlings in droves get the word . . .
But if I'm going to be a bird fancier,
I'd fancy a fancier bird!

Jeanne Westerdale

If you'd be interested in a pelagic trip out of Hatteras on the following dates, let Bill Williams know for details. (August 22, September 5, 6, October 11.)

ASK OWL

It seems the female spotted sandpiper took up the ERA call long before Homo sapiens. She will entertain consecutive mates during a season leaving each to handle the eggs and chicks. She will finally settle down with her last mate of the season and lend a hand with the family chores.