

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

September 1982

August waned with an uncharacteristic ' dry, cool whimper as September waxed full-moon resplendent on nights that weren't polluted by the drone of air conditioners. Though the calendar reminds us that Summer persists another three weeks, the tell-tale signs of Fall are already with us--- cardinal flower, green (what's that?) warblers, college freshmen and football, orange buses, and the occasional terrestrial-bound leaf beating its limbmates to the impending rush to come.

Ah, but Fall bespeaks other glories to come for the bird faithful. After a drought of summer meetings we are ready to inaugurate the season with a meeting of the minds on Wednesday September 15 at 7:30 p.m. in room 117 of Millington Hall on the campus of William and Mary. The evening festivities will be highlighted by a program on the life history of the oystercatcher. Our expert commentator will be Mr. Bob Anderson, a graduate student in ornithology at the college. Many of you may recall that Bob was one of the recipients of our first student scholarship last spring. This talented field naturalist and photographer used the funds he received to study the oystercatcher, primarily on Fisherman Island during this past summer. You will find his knowledge and insight very informative. Please make plans to attend.

Our field trip for 1982's ninth month will coincide with the Virginia Society of Ornithology's autumn field excursion to the Eastern Shore. We plan to head for the Kiptopeke banding station on Saturday the 18th. We will depart, as usual, at 7:00 a.m. from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center south parking lot. This promises to be a super day. Not only will we visit the banding station where any and all fall migrants are possible but plans are being made to stop at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands. Trip participants will combine in as few vehicles as possible to reduce the share of the \$18.00 round trip fees for the bridge-tunnel, not to mention the petrol. A lunch and munchies are highly in order and one should always expect cool conditions near the Bay, despite what it's like here at home. Bug spray should also be at hand. A trip such as this requires alot of effort on the part of the organizers and deserves the support of everyone. In fact this may be one of the finest journeys of the year. Be there.

Last month's trip to Hog Island saw only five participants. Many migrant shorebirds were at the refuge to greet them including least, western, semi-palmated, stilt, spotted, solitary and pectoral sandpipers. Black-bellied plovers, semipalmated plovers, bank and barn swallows, royal, Forster's and Caspian terns were also seen, as was a bar-headed goose, most likely the same individual noted in the spring. In addition to various herons and egrets the group also spotted bobolinks, brown-headed nuthatches, ospreys and eastern kingbirds. Bob Cross noted that he'd seen a marsh hawk (northern harrier) at Hog Island on August 20, however, the field trip group wasn't so lucky. It was a grand day.

On other fronts word drifted in that a curlew sandpiper and purple gallinule had been seen in early August at Chincoteague. Lots of summer rain there has created high water levels making shorebird watching difficult. On Craney Island on the other hand the extra water has made birding spectacular and several folks have seen both northern and Wilson's phalaropes there recently.

A late report came my way from the Nature Conservancy staff at Nassawadox on the Eastern Shore. An immature scissor-tailed flycatcher spent a July day at their Brownsville headquarters feeding leisurely from pillar to post.

On the local level bobolinks are part of the morning menu over most of the local marshes. During a September 6 fishing venture Dick Mines tallied at least 30 sora on the Chickahominy's Yarmouth Creek. These small rails whinny like weaning puppies during the flood tides of the full moon. Come the first frost and the sora vanish, audibly anyway!

The bluebird trail at the Williamsburg Country Club was reduced from 10 boxes to 6 this summer for reasons unknown to John and Betty Williams who monitored the trail weekly. Nevertheless, the boxes produced an incredible 48 bluebird young! We owe a great deal of thanks and appreciation to the Country Club employees as well as to John and Betty for their dedication. Details on the York River Park and Carter's Grove trails are forthcoming and should be as good as those from the Country Club.

As mentioned previously the Kiptopeke banding station has opened as of September 4. This marks almost twenty years of continuous operation of the station, but underlying those years problems have arisen. As of last year the station saw its future operation as bleak to the point of complete closure. Most of the problems arose from lack of daily help to man the 40 nets around the station. Many days there were only one or two people to help out, and this simply isn't efficient. The VSD became concerned and has taken on the situation as a major project. The future is still in doubt but for the present help is still the key factor. If there is any way you can lend a hand or want more information please call me (229-0098). The potential for a bird study station at Kiptopeke is unlimited, but only if the human potential can be tapped. Kiptopeke offers more than just banding for the birder. Hawk watching there in September and October is unparalleled anywhere in Virginia. An average day renders 10-14 species of raptors in numbers that can reach well over a thousand. An attempt will be made to record over 200 hours of hawk counts this fall. Bill Williams heads the project and could always use enthusiastic, willing eyes to spot those birds of prey as they cruise through. We've had goshawk and one golden eagle over a five year period not to mention thousands of sharp-shinned hawks and hundreds of Cooper's hawks and merlins. Peregrine falcons are regularly tallied. Call Bill (229-0098) if you'd like to see raptors in the greatest way possible.

The new sixth edition of the American Ornithologist's Union Checklist of North American Birds is presently in press, scheduled to be released in 1983. Copies of the checklist will not be cheap when it hits the book stores. A 16-page pamphlet showing the updated list called the "Thirty-fourth supplement to the AOU check-list of North American Birds" is available for \$3.00 postpaid from Dr. Glen E. Woolfenden, Dept. of Biology, University of South Florida, Tampa, Fla. 33620. Checks should be made to the AOU.

The VSD annual field trip to Chincoteague will be held September 17-19. For more information get in touch with Tom Armour, Ruth Beck or Bill Williams. The birding for this event has been outstanding over recent years and the knowledge gained from such a weekend can't be beat.

From time to time folks inquire about binocular reconditioning and repair. This information from the Hampton Roads Bird Club newsletter may help.

Contact Mr. Robert N. Carpenter, 205 Coventry Road, Virginia Beach, Va. 23462. Phone 804/499-6188.

Also, many people like to bird the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel islands. To get permission for a month, six months, year or even a day write to Mr. William E. Anderson, Executive Director, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel District, North Toll Plaza, P. O. Box 111, Cape Charles, Va. 23310, or you may telephone in Norfolk 1-464-3511. Remember to obey all rules so birders can continue to have access to these bird "traps".

Tom Armour lit out for the Pacific Northwest this summer and found profitable birding on that side of the continent. He saw rhinoceros and marbled murrelet, blue grouse, gray partridge, dipper (which he photographed), varied thrush, McGillivray's warbler, Northwestern crow and glaucous-winged gull to name a few. Don't rub it in Pres.! Way to go.

Vice President Beck hied away to Bermuda where she saw kiskadee flycatchers and tropic birds. Hey---I went to Norge and saw a crow. Does that count?!

ASK OWL

Sharp-shinned hawks get their unusual appellation from the fact that the feathers of the leg extend only one-third (or less) of the way down, compared to one-half the way in other hawks! This exposes the slender shank or "shin" of the leg.

Please notice the Bird Seed Savings Day information enclosed. Not only can we use your business but your help with unloading and distribution. Call Ruth Beck 229-3837.