

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

November 1982

Evening and weekend hours reach a unique kinship during this eleventh month. Each is filled with the rasping clamor of rakes forcing leaves into piles for burning, mulching or being inhaled into the bowels of a disposal vehicle. What a fate for the ticker-tape trees provide as Fall parades into Winter. Yet the sounds and smells those leaves produce are subtle reminders that Nature depends on renewal. Its only man that takes leaves as a nuisance.

Let's hope you will take leave to attend this month's meeting on Wednesday November 17 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 117 of Millington Hall on the campus of William and Mary. The featured speaker for the program will be Mr. Fenton Day, a graduate student in ornithology at the college. Fenton was one of two recipients of this year's research grant sponsored by the club and funded through Bird Seed Savings Day. During the summer of 1982 Mr. Day studied the interactions between herring gulls and terns and skimmers that nested together on Metomkin Island on the Eastern Shore. Fenton's talk will focus on the results of his studies and hopefully shed some light on the effects the increasing gull populations may have on other colonial species sharing the same nesting habitat.

In addition to the program we will be voting on next year's slate of club officers. Nominating Committee chairman Bill Snyder has proposed the following nominees.

President -- Thom Blair  
Vice President (Programs) -- Bob Cross  
Vice President (Newsletter) -- Bill Williams  
Secretary -- Alice Springe  
Treasurer -- Leigh Jones  
Board Members -- Fred Blystone, Carolyn Lowe

It should be made clear that this meeting will be our last for 1982. The December meeting had traditionally been waived in lieu of our annual participation in the Audubon Christmas Bird Counts. This years count will be on Sunday December 19. Bill Williams (229-0098) is in charge of the event and must know soon if you can help out in this worthwhile project. Details will appear in the December Newsletter. Please make plans now to assist even if its only for a while at your feeder.

The field trip for November promises to be an excellent one. We are scheduled to visit Hog Island refuge across the James in Surry County. As usual participants are asked to gather at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday November 20 in the parking lot that is to the immediate right of the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center as you face the center from the Parkway (previously referred to as the south parking lot). The focus for the excursion will be the myriad waterfowl attracted to the refuge. Canada geese should be numerous and already several snow geese have been reported there. In addition one can expect all varieties of ducks including green winged teal, mallards and black ducks, wigeon, gadwall, pintails, ring-necked ducks, bufflehead and a few scaup. Marsh hawks should be available along with the hope of bald eagles. Great egrets and great blue herons are likely, as are swamp sparrows, coots, thousands of blackbirds and a few shorebirds. Goodies to look for include white-pelican (Steady Eddie??), white-fronted geese and loggerhead shrike. If the weather is warm don't be surprised to see a mosquito or two. Be sure to dress warm and bring some munchies.

The profits for the Bird Seed Savings Day handled so admirably and capably by Fred Blystone are apparently going to reach the \$1500 - \$1800 category. The club has voted that some of this money be used to give Fred a sumptuous meal at the place of his choice. Fred opted for the Bahamas but fortunately has agreed to stick closer to home. Don't you agree that Mr. Blystone has more than earned his prize.

The only problem that arose with the seed sale was due to the manufacturer. Apparently a number of the 25 pound bags of sunflower seeds were mixed with large amounts of corn. Fred assures us the error will be properly corrected right away.

Cynthia Long, our effervescent Secretary, brought a sample of the new club patch to our last meeting. Rich Goll's design of the strikingly colored red-headed woodpecker stood out handsomely against a blue background and red border. Truly our patch rivals or exceeds any this writer has seen anywhere. Two hundred and twenty patches have been ordered and it was approved that members joining the club as Patrons (\$25 or more) would receive a patch free. Other members may purchase them at a price yet to be decided.

Leigh Jones has agreed to coordinate our Bluebird Committee for the upcoming year. She will have a tough act to follow in Jewel Thomas who put our program on its feet and made it a success.

Bob Cross is looking for volunteers to assist him with winterizing purple martin motels. Essentially this involves removing old nesting material and plugging the nest holes to keep English sparrows and starlings out.

Enclosed with this letter are two items of importance. One is the Thanksgiving Window Watch. Directions for the count are on each sheet and this easy and worthwhile project takes only an hour of your time. This second item is a revision of our local rare bird alert system. If you see a bird you think is unusual let Bill Sheehan know. If you would like to be a part of the phone tree also give the Captain a ring.

#### CALL FOR BIRD FEEDER AND HOUSE DESIGNS

A new book, tentatively titled The Audubon Society Handbook for Attracting Birds, will include innovative homemade designs for bird feeders, houses and baths. The author, Stephen W. Kress, is looking for improvements to standard models of feeders and houses and original designs for any homemade bird attracting creations. Novel approaches to repelling squirrels, cats and nuisance birds are also welcome. In addition to the handbook, some of the submitted material may be selected for articles in the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's new magazine, The Living Bird Quarterly. The designers of selected plans will be acknowledged in the book and articles. Mail detailed plans with measurements (and photographs if available) to:

Dr. Stephen W. Kress  
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca, New York 14850

Obviously our primary interest as a club is in birdlife. But all too often we are made to remember that birds are only one part of the fauna around us. While squirrels bedevil us at feeders other mammals offer a more pleasing diversion from featherdome. Take for example Thom Blair's hike down from a ridge in Shenandoah National Park on October 10 where he had been counting hawks. His path came across none other than a brown bear cub!

Over here on Queen's Lake my bird shooshing one afternoon was brought to an abrupt halt when my boat drifted around a corner and I found myself the object of careful scrutiny by an otter which was resting on a small dock. And finally I had the unique pleasure of having a red fox escort my car along a farm drive to my hawk watch outpost just prior to dawn several weeks ago. Then again we can't forget Ruth Beck seeing a bobcat or Tom Armour stumbling on to a skunk. All of these encounters were brought to be as a result of pursuing birds. Neat, huh?!

The state's bird list jumped another two notches this past weekend as the Virginia Society of Ornithology's Records Committee met and approved the acceptance

of sight records of Ross' goose and Barrow's goldeneye. The latter bird was found and superbly described by our own Rich Goll and Cindy Fletcher. The bird in question was a female, creating a serious identification problem not to mention the problem of trying to convince a committee that the bird in fact had been seen. Rich's description along with collaboration from several birders cinched the record which had been in limbo since last February. The two additions brings the avifaunal list to 408.

Rich's birding enthusiasm earned him the chairmanship of a one-man committee to develop a statewide rare bird alert. The proposal for such a bird alert system was presented by Rich at the VSO Board of Directors meeting on November 6. Results of the proposal will be delayed until various groups around the state can analyze and comment.

The local bird scene has really developed in to a battle of waterways recently. Sora rails attracted several people to College Creek in early October. These shy birds were present up through the seventeenth when the ~~first~~ frost tipped their tootsies and sent them further south. While looking for these birds snipe, marsh wrens, sharp-tailed sparrows and yellow-throats were also encountered. One evening not only were sora heard but also a Virginia rail, 2 clapper rails and possibly one king rail sounded off in the marsh to a magnificent sunset.

Alice Springe had a scarlet tanager at her home October 16 and on that same day a female common eider was discovered on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. By late October oldsquaw and all three scoters were being seen off the tunnel islands.

Carolyn Lowe had ring-necked ducks, ruddies, and redheads at Camp Peary in early October and closed out the month with our second local record of a great cormorant. Superb!

Bill Sheehan's weekly treks to Cheatham Annex came up with one unusual record--chicken\$. You know, one good cluck deserves another. Wish I'd seen 'em for my year list!

Hawk counts at Kiptopeke went exceptionally well in 1982. Thanks to the persistent efforts of Dot Silsby and her crew we were able to put in about 140 hours of counting. In all almost 12,000 raptors were recorded. That's 3000 more than the same number of hours produced last year! Not only that but we had both white and brown pelicans dazzle us to provide a break in the monotony of counting eagles, peregrine falcons and merlins. My personal thanks is extended to Rich and Cindy, Dot, Betty Williams, Leigh Jones, Ruth, Tom Armour, Thom Blair, Alice Apringe, Carolyn Lowe, Ann and Paul Smith, Bettye Fields and Dan Walker. Certainly I've omitted someone--but not in spirit. I can't wait for next year!

Ask Owl: The term scaup alludes to the duck's habit of feeding on scaups or scalps --beds of shellfish.

Ever wonder why some ducks have to run across the water to get airborne and others don't? The runners are usually diving ducks whose short, pointed wings are great for underwater maneuvering. Dabblers on the other hand have longer, broader wings and their "wing-load" is thus less enabling them to pop quickly from the surface.



1. Name of observer, and address where the observations were made. (Please be sure your correct mailing address is on the other side of this sheet.)

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Zip \_\_\_\_\_

10. Miles from post office \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Date: November 25, 1982
17. Exact hour of count: Began \_\_\_\_\_, ended \_\_\_\_\_. (Use 24-hour clock if convenient)
19. Temperature at beginning of count: \_\_\_\_\_°F
21. Weather (Please circle or underline): 1. Sunny 2. Partly cloudy, some sunshine. 3. Partly cloudy, no sunshine. 4. Completely overcast. 5. Overcast, light drizzle. 6. Overcast, occasional showers. 7. Persistent rain. 8. Occasional snow, sleet or freezing rain. 9. Persistent snow, sleet or freezing rain.
22. Wind: 1. None or very gentle. 3. Gentle 5. Moderate 7. Strong 9. Very Strong
23. Habitat: 1. Urban, tiny yard or none. 2. Urban, large yard. 3. Suburban, tiny yard or none. 4. Suburban, large yard or gardens or fields. 5. Rural, mostly croplands nearby. 6. Rural, mostly grassy fields or pastures nearby. 7. Rural, mixed woods and fields. 8. Rural, mostly pine woods nearby. 9. Rural, mostly deciduous woods nearby.
24. Type(s) of feeding situation(s) or baths: 1. Cracked corn, only, on ground. 2. Mixed seed, with or without cracked corn, on ground. 3. Raised feeder, mixed seed with some sunflower. 4. Raised feeder, anything but thistle or sunflower. 5. Raised feeder, sunflower seed only. 6. Thistle seed in separate feeder. 7. Suet, with mixed seeds or peanuts, or other food material. 8. Suet, without mixed seeds or peanuts. 9. Bird bath or pan of water.
25. Total number of feeders, grain stations on ground, and bird baths: \_\_\_\_\_

**BIRDS OBSERVED**

SPECIES OF BIRD	NUMBER IN CIRCLE	OUTSIDE OF CIRCLE	SPECIES OF BIRD	NUMBER IN CIRCLE	OUTSIDE OF CIRCLE
27. Rock Dove			56. House Sparrow		
28. Mourning Dove			62. Cardinal		
29. Common Flicker			64. Purple Finch		
31. Red-bellied Woodpecker			65. House Finch		
32. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			67. American Goldfinch		
33. Downy Woodpecker			69. Dark-eyed Junco		
34. Hairy Woodpecker			74. White-throated Sparrow		
36. Blue Jay			76. Song Sparrow		
37. Common Crow			Additional Species:		
38. Black-capped Chickadee					
39. Carolina Chickadee					
40. Tufted Titmouse					
41. White-breasted Nuthatch					
45. Carolina Wren					
46. Mockingbird					
51. Ruby-crowned Kinglet					
53. Starling					

(Over, please)

**THE THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT — NOVEMBER 25, 1982**

**SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE**

**LYNCHBURG BIRD CLUB**

We invite you to join in the Thanksgiving Bird Count on Thanksgiving Day this year. If you are interested, but have never participated before, here is what the count is "all about". Observers, working individually, gather information on the occurrence of birds around their feeders during one uninterrupted hour on Thanksgiving Day each year. Birds are counted if they come into a pre-designated horizontal circle 15 feet in diameter. Numbers of individuals of each kind are recorded on the special tabulation form provided on the other side of this sheet. Notes are also made on weather conditions, habitat, types of feeders, time of day, etc. We ask you then to mail the completed form to the compiler, Dr. Ernest P. Edwards, Sweet Briar, VA 24595. All of the information in the individual reports is then stored in a computer databank, and analyzed to yield valuable insights into trends in abundance, migration patterns, factors influencing bird distribution, and the like.

**Instructions — Please use a standard procedure for the count, as follows:**

1. Select a circular area 15 feet in diameter, horizontally, in a place which you can watch conveniently. Include as many feeders, bird baths, shrubs, trees, and other attractions as you wish. Now imagine the circle extending upward, as a cylinder, to an indefinite height into the air. This is your magic circle for observation. Count the birds of each species which come into this circle (or cylinder) during the hour of your count, and write the totals for each species in the chart on the front of the sheet. If you see birds which are not on the list, write the names under Additional Species, and indicate how many of each you saw. (If you want to count the number of times birds visit the feeder, as well as numbers of individuals, you could enter the numbers as, for example: Tufted Titmouse 3/42. This would indicate that you saw 3 individual Tufted Titmice make a total of 42 visits to the feeder during the hour.) If you want to record the birds you see outside the circle, write the numbers in the separate column provided. The information about birds outside the circle is not stored in the computer, however. Be sure you count for one hour, of sixty consecutive minutes.

2. Record the information about time, weather, habitat, etc., on the tabulation form. Be sure to fill in the name of the person who did the count, and the address where the count was actually done. Usually this will be the same as your mailing address, but whether it is or not, please be sure that the count address is on the tabulation form (the other side of this sheet), and that your correct mailing address is on this side of this sheet. Please send in your count whether you see many or few birds, or even if you see none at all. This is particularly important when we try to make year-by-year comparisons of the abundance of certain birds.

Each year we publish a Thanksgiving Bird Count News covering the previous year's count. If you would like a copy of the News in late winter or early spring of 1983 please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your count.

Please send the report to: Dr. Ernest P. Edwards, Thanksgiving Bird Count, Sweet Briar, VA 24595.

**DR. ERNEST P. EDWARDS**  
**THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT**  
**SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE**  
**SWEET BRIAR, VIRGINIA 24595**  
**24595**

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