

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER
May 1982

Hooray, Hooray! It's the first of May. Outdoor birding starts today! Borrowing and restructuring such a dilly gives proper perspective to the initial segment of a month that has been all it is cracked up to be. Have you ever seen such a show of dogwoods? The lamb of April was a nasty old goat in 1982. If the wind wasn't whipping the trees into a frenzy the cold nights and late frosts were adding their final remembrances to the winter of '82. Could the governments be on to something? Think about it. Ever since we hit daylight savings time the weather has been superb! And the flowers of spring have regaled every minute of the way.

The upbeat mood of May should be the ideal setting for the season's last monthly meeting. The program will feature those elegant and delightful songsters, the warblers. Come see and hopefully hear a description of all of these elusive little jewels of the treetops and foliage. The meeting will be in room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday May 19. This program will be an auditory and visual delight, so make plans to attend. Come on, it's still light at 7:30!

Our field foray for May will find us at York River State Park on Saturday May 22. As usual, participants are asked to meet at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center at 7:00 a.m. The park should be hopping with our feathered features. The spring migration will be in its latter stages and local breeders will be in full array. This park is underbirded, especially by our group. We've adopted the facility and have the beginnings of a potentially excellent bluebird trail there. Make a spring morning a little special and give this trip a try. There's more to the morning than sunrise. Experience the sounds of nature in action!

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find our current 1982 paid membership list. Our club has suffered some attrition recently, but to balance that we've gained some new members. We want to welcome them and extend an invitation to any and all who want to know the bird-word. Also attached is a synopsis of the upcoming Virginia Society of Ornithology foray to Bath County. If you can find the time, go. There's no better birding experience than a foray. Bath County is a world apart from our Coastal Plain hub-bub and the avian and human companionship on forays is exceptional.

On April 26, Jewel Thomas, our locally recognized Bluebird Committee chairperson, put up five bluebird boxes at York River State Park to establish our third working trail. Jewel has several bluebird boxes that are extra. She is willing to sell them at a nominal fee if anyone is interested in getting bluebirds (or other species) to use them. If you are interested let her know. By the way, it was reported at the state level that over the years the combined efforts of only six of the VSO's twenty-four chapters have produced an astounding 11,900 bluebird young with their

trails. Considering several chapters with large trails (200 boxes or more) did not report the number is even more fantastic! Let's keep it up. Clay and Cynthia Long are doing so. They're looking after the Carter's Grove trail and so far have found several chickadee nests. Our trail at the Williamsburg Country Club has six active bluebird nests and a total of fourteen young are reported from three of these boxes. Great!

At the Virginia Society of Ornithology's annual meeting held May 7 - 9 a few local folks got some well deserved recognition. First of all, the Conservation Ranger at Cheatham Annex, Walt Fuerer, received the organization's annual conservation award. This highly regarded award is given to the person or group judged to have provided the most toward preserving avian habitat and/or contributed to avian conservation during the year. Mr. Fuerer has established one of the few successfully stable pheasant populations in the state, and maintains an excellent flock of wild turkeys, as well as a large number of bobwhite quail. He oversees better than forty bluebird boxes and several large purple martin motels. The Cheatham base has become a veritable wildlife sanctuary due to his tireless field work, providing feed patches and shelter for all manner of animals not the least of which are feathered. We should all give a salute and doff of the hat to an award well deserved, and especially to a man who has more than earned it.

Also at the VSO meeting, Ruth Beck and Rick Goll were elected to three-year terms on the organization's Board of Directors. Ruth is a former VSO treasurer and helped put the state's bird site guide together, and Rich continues to be one of the area's leading birders. Congratulations, deserved people!

When we announced to the College of William and Mary's Biology Department that the bird club was offering a scholarship stipend for ornithological research for one of its students we had no idea the competition would be so tough. The executive committee is pleased to announce that awards of \$250 each will go to Bob Anderson and Fenton Day for their summer research. Bob is going to study the feeding and population dynamics of oystercatchers, while Fenton is looking into the effects that herring gull colonies have on adjacent tern and skimmer colonies. We wish them both success and a sincere round of congratulations. A plaque denoting the award and future awards will be placed in their honor in the Millington Hall library.

This time of year a lot of us get phone calls about birds (especially waxwings) crashing into picture windows. From the oncoming bird's point of view it sees only more trees, not a window. If you would like to stem the destruction try putting two circles of yellow paper (or whatever) on the window pane to represent owl eyes. This should deter the birds from wanting to head in the window's direction. Another suggestion is to place a hawk or falcon silhouette on the pane to "scare" potential lethal flightsters away.

You may be wondering what the strong winds of April did to the nesting ospreys and eagles. According to flight survey results by Mitchell Byrd, the winds were disastrous. He feels the eagle nesting success will be reduced from the 63% level of 1981 to 35% this year. Areas along the

Potomac seemed to be particularly hard hit. As for ospreys, the picture is equally bleak. A pair at Felgates Creek is literally nesting right on the water at high tide!

Dr. Byrd also reported that Governor Robb is about to declare Caledon State Park in northern Virginia a natural area. The park often has as many as fifty bald eagles there. The design will have the area used for limited educational endeavors. Three cheers for the wisdom to look to the future for nature and man!

Mitchell also related that there are four actively courting pairs of peregrine falcons in the state. Pairs can be found in Norfolk, Fisherman Island, Cobb Island and Assateague Island. Will this be the year the peregrine returns as a breeder in the Old Dominion? All indications are very positive it will.

The word is out that Crazy has returned to 134 Ferncliff Drive. Had I received this notification from Dick Springe I could have figured who he was talking about. Instead I got the report from Alice, so I have to assume she's talking about her perennial pileated woodpecker! I guess you could say he's logged another year?!

Ann Smith related that her charming orange-crowned warbler stayed around until Easter Sunday. Her orioles have departed also to be replaced by incoming catbirds for the summer.

Jim and Bet Carson of Queen's Lake have had a marvelous time watching a Momma wood duck and her little fluffy ducklings scurry about recently. Many of these get snatched by snapping turtles. We hope such a fate won't befall these fellows.

Tom Armour has no less than six species of birds nesting on his lot, seven if you include the Canada geese on the pond behind his house. They all know who's the local head honcho for bird lovers!

Bob and Dona Morris put out bird seed just like most everyone else in the club. Unlike everyone else they have more than just feathered critters dining at their table. Oh, no. They have a furry flyer. That's right--a flying squirrel regularly visits their feeding station and even allows you to get within a foot or so of it! Neat, huh?

Rich Goll recently changed his residence to a Williamsburg address just off Hubbard Lane near James-York Plaza. One day when he returned from a birding walk in the nearby woods he received a truly colonial welcome from a truly colonial bird. There, perched on his roof was a cattle egret. Can you top that?

The local goody birds recently have been few but nonetheless spectacular. In early April an Iceland gull showed up at Fort Monroe in Hampton. It could be reliably found sitting on the pilings of the burned-out piers on the base. On April 28 Fenton Day found a Lawrence's warbler at Jolly Pound. If you look this bird up in your field guides you will find that it is a hybrid between the blue-winged warbler (a regular here

in spring) and the golden-winged warbler (rare here any time). The bird was seen and heard singing the bee, buzz of the blue-winged parent, and was not reported after the morning of April 30. This is a great find for our area.

The April field trip lured only five people. Since Cheatham Annex was filled with maneuvering soldiers the crew lit out for Hog Island. Steady Eddie, the state-famous white pelican, was still there along with lots of yellowlegs and a few lingering ducks and a pair of bald eagles.

President Armour went over to Sussex County recently with Vice-President Beck to monitor red-cockaded woodpecker nests. Tom noticed some movement in the grass and discovered several woodcock chicks! After photographing them at ground level he was amazed to find he had almost plopped himself down on a couple more hidden in the grass!

Dr. Byrd was ambling along the beach on Fisherman Island not long ago when all of a sudden a cowbird plunked like a stone at his feet. Try as he may, the despicable bird would not leave his shoe tops. Glancing overhead the reason for the cowbird's behavior became ever so clear. There, wheeling about, was an eager male peregrine falcon. A quick shuffle of the tootsies sent the cowbird off and it quickly flew head long right into the marsh with a peregrine in hot pursuit! Don't ya' love it?!

The final tally for this year's spring count will probably reach about 147 species. The results are still being assembled. Only the barest coverage of the area was available, but everyone did a super job. Special thanks go to our Hampton Roads friends, Teta Kain, Lew Wilkinson, Dot Silsby and Betty Fields. At the final tally we had garnered 141 species. Some post-tally hustling added yellow-crowned night heron, least sandpipers and snipe and a telephone call confirmed the presence of purple finches in the area on count day. Hog Island called in late with Steady Eddie, lesser yellowlegs and worm-eating warblers. It was obvious that some migrants were only momentarily arriving. Acadian flycatcher numbers were way down, but by mid-week following the count they could be heard in numerous locations. A final summary of the count will be posted with the June newsletter. Thanks to everyone who gave their time to help.

You always hear that it's best to move on th greener pastures. Well, this couldn't be less appropriate than for the pelagic trip on May 9 out of Rudee Inlet, in conjunction with the VSO annual meeting. Green was not the color of envy either, that day. Instead green was the color of most of the fifty hardy souls who ventured sixty-five miles off the Virginia coast. Nevertheless, the rough seas produced some super results. No less than 23 fulmars were tallied along with 3 arctic terns, 2 ocean sunfish, ~~MAJESTIC SHEARWATER~~, spotted and common dolphins and a herring gull hitching a leisurely ride on a sea turtle's back! Heave, ho! Just kidding!

Anyone interested in the pelagic schedule for this summer and fall give me a holler (229-0098).

Ruth Beck is banding again at the Pop Lab. She can always use extra hands.

ASK OWL:

The name petrel is a reference to the birds seeming to walk on water as they feed. The allusion is to St. Peter walking on water.

BATH COUNTY FORAY 1982

TIME AND PLACE Bath County, Virginia, from late Tuesday afternoon 8 June to Sunday 13 June 1982. Headquarters: Warm Springs Inn at the intersection of Va. Rt. 39 and U.S. Rt. 220.

PURPOSE To make as complete a survey as possible of the breeding birds of Bath County. Emphasis will be placed on high altitude areas such as Paddy Knob, Duncan Knob, and Warm Springs Mountain, also the areas around Lake Moomaw, Back Creek, Cowpasture and Jackson Rivers.

REGISTRATION Please register by 1 June 1982 with the director of the Foray, YuLee Larner, 1020 W. Beverley St., Staunton, VA 24401, or at the Annual Meeting, if you plan to attend. Please indicate who will be in your party, the days you plan to participate, and where you will be staying. Give your address and phone number where you can be reached prior to the Foray.

ACCOMMODATIONS Participants should make their own reservations well in advance of the Foray. Motels include:

Warm Springs Inn, Rt. 220, Warm Springs, VA 24484, Phone (703) 839-5351.
Rates: Single \$16.00-\$25.00, Double \$26.00-\$31.00, Three \$36.00,
Four \$44.00. Dining room for dinner.

Roseloe Motel, Rt. 2, Box 590, Hot Springs, VA 24445, Phone (703) 938-5373).
Rates: Single \$22.00, Double, 1 bed, \$28.00, Double, 2 beds \$30.00,
Each additional person, \$4.00. No restaurant.

Hillcrest Motel, Rt. 220 South, Hot Springs, VA 24445, Phone (703) 839-5136.
Rates: Single \$22.00, Double \$30.00, Each additional person, \$4.00.
Status of restaurant not guaranteed by owner!

Campgrounds: Douthat State Park, Blowing Springs, Hidden Valley, and the Bolar Mountain campground at Lake Moomaw. All are on a first come basis, no reservations.

FOOD Participants should bring food for breakfasts and lunches. Dinner is available at Warm Springs Inn as well as at several elite establishments in the area. There is one fast food restaurant and Sam Snead's Pub in Hot Springs, serving lunch and dinner.

MAPS Bath County Highway Map: 26¢ postpaid, from Virginia Dept. of Highways, Office of Public Relations, 1221 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA 23219.

Sportsman's Guide to the Warm Springs Ranger District:
50¢ postpaid, check made to Treasurer of Virginia, available from the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230.

NOTE Bath County is virtually unexplored ornithologically, therefore this Foray promises to be a delightful challenge to Virginia's birders. Species reported here previously in June include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Black-capped Chickadee, Winter Wren, Mourning Warbler, and Red Crossbill. There should be many more, perhaps Alder Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Nashville Warbler, and others. Species to look for include Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Tree Swallow, Bewick's Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Bobolink, Purple Finch, and Savannah and Swamp Sparrow. Participants will work in small groups with field work beginning about dawn. They will report to the director each evening and make plans for the following day and hand in field cards.