

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

October 1982

Octobers are easy to like. Their purpose in human time is to set the table for the ensuing holiday season. They accomplish this end locally with subtle ease trading Indian summer days for progressively cool nights. Suddenly we discover summer is long over when the multitudes of colors replace the green we became so accustomed to. Octobers offer the best of two seasons in comfortable, quiet elegance gently reminding that winter is approaching.

Thus it becomes necessary to remind you that our regular monthly meeting will take place on Wednesday October 20 at 7:30 p.m. in room 117 of Millington Hall at William and Mary. Tom Armour, our venturesome President, will take us along on his excursion to the Pacific Northwest through the magic of his excellent photography. Come dip with dippers and hear of varied thrushes and auklets. Escape to the other side of the continent. You'll love it.

The Halloween month's field trip will find us plodding the beautiful trails of York River State Park on Sunday, October 24. Following our usual schedule of a 7:00 a.m. departure from the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center south parking lot, the participants will caravan to the park to feast on the ornithological bounty along the pond, river and superb paths at the park. There should still be a few warblers passing through and the sparrows will be in full force. Migrant waterfowl should be on the river and there is always the possibility of turkeys or an owl in the woods. Field trip chairman, Thom Blair, discovered an immature common gallinule on the pond there September 23. So you never know--unless of course you are there. Do it!

It's the time of year when next year must be planned for. A nominating committee for the club's 1983 officers has been assembled by the Executive Committee, and consists of Julie Hotchkiss, Bill Sheehan and Bill Snyder. Please let Bill Snyder, the committee chairman, know of your thoughts concerning next year's leaders (229-8526). The election will be held at the November meeting.

The Executive Committee is proposing an amendment to our constitution under Article 3, Section 2 - Membership. The amendment will establish a membership category of Patron for anyone paying annual dues of \$25.00 or more. Be prepared to vote on this proposal at this month's meeting so it can be put into effect in 1983.

Congratulations to Rich Goll for his superb entries in to our club patch competition which he won with a red-headed woodpecker design. This contribution narrowly beat out his stylized bald eagle. Other entrants included designs by Brian Taber, Tom Armour, Betty Williams and Ruth Beck. The decision was very difficult and we would have been superbly represented by any of the competitors. Rich's award is on its way, and the patch production is being pursued by our secretary, Cynthia Long.

Our Purple Martin Committee has been allotted up to \$300 to be used to repair, clean and conduct general maintenance of the many martin motels censused over the summer months. Bob Cross, Sam Hart and Ruth banded almost 470 martin chicks this summer and hope for more extended coverage in 1983. One of the young banded this summer was recovered in Salisbury, Maryland. How's that for wandering?

In addition to the 48 bluebird young produced at the trail on the Williamsburg Country Club golf course the Carter's Grove trail produced 27 young. Cynthia and Bob Long checked the area during the nesting season and reported one box stolen. Plans are being made to relocate some boxes for easier access not only

for the bluebirds but also for the box checkers who want to avoid the summer ravages of ticks and chiggers.

The Canadian Wildlife service has been color marking Common Terns, and asks that any sightings of these marked birds be sent to Hans Blokpoel, 1725 Woodward Drive, Ottawa, Ontario. K1A 0E7.

For the third year the club's major money-making project, Bird Seed Savings Day, ran like clockwork. Under the meticulously organized direction of Fred Blystone the sale and delivery were excellent. Details on raised funds are still being assembled and will be announced at the meeting. We all owe Fred a great deal of thanks.

Dispersed throughout her numerous activities Ruth Beck published a descriptive article on red-cockaded woodpeckers, an endangered species, in the Virginia Nature Conservancy's summer 1982 Newsletter. The article outlines the research on this unique woodpecker, and details their nesting requirements and social habits. Further there is a description of the habitat needs of the species. Following Ruth's article the Conservancy has a written comment on the problems encountered in protecting this bird which chooses to nest in very valuable stands of pine trees. Fortunately, the organization has found "a sympathetic landowner" and plans are being formulated to protect the two colonies of red cockaded in the area. At present no more than 50 birds are estimated for Virginia. Let's hope the saving effort is not too late. Ruth's efforts have certainly made a huge impact. Outstanding.

More than 58,000 Virginia taxpayers contributed \$345,000 to the state's non-game research program through their 1981 tax returns. The number of individuals contributing amounted to only 4 percent of those tax payers due refunds, with the average contribution amounting to \$5.89. This is the first year this option has been offered in Virginia and the Old Dominion became the twelfth state to initiate such a program.

Set aside Sunday December 19 now. This is the day we'll have our annual Christmas Bird Count. In lieu of the count there will be no December club meeting. We need everyone to help. You can't say you didn't know!

The club's September 18 field trip may prove to be the year's best. The five who went, Thom Blair, Alice Springe, Carolyn Lowe and John and Eleanor Hertz, had a memorable day. Stopping along the four "islands" of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel they got close-up looks at a Connecticut warbler and a Black-burnian warbler. The latter bird subsequently met its demise at the talons of one of the many sharp-shinned hawks prowling the tunnel looking for dinner. A similar fate befell a chat, though the diner was a merlin in this case. Also seen was a lesser black-backed gull, brown pelicans off Fisherman Island, and a loggerhead shrike teed up in a bush at the old Cape Charles air tracking station. The group then put in two hours of hawk counting at Kiptopeke accumulating 186 birds including 2 merlins! What a day.

At the same time many birders were further north at Chincoteague participating in the Virginia Society of Ornithology's fall weekend. Highlights there included most all of the shorebirds including Baird's sandpiper and Hudsonian godwit. A yellow-bellied flycatcher was seen and heard by Fenton Day, and the Pony Trail produced about a dozen species of warbler during one visit. On hand was also a flock of 100 snow geese!

The sounds you hear locally in the bird world may very well come across as tom-toms, er....Tom - Thoms, that is. I refer here to Tom Armour and Thom Blair. Mr. Blair has contact in high places as we all know, and this gives him

an inside track on orders for goodie birds. In August he observed a pair of loons at College Creek and as previously mentioned he came up with our second common gallinule of the year.

We're never sure with whom President Armour puts in his requests for bird spectaculars but nevertheless it works. On September 28 he produced a new species for our area when he saw up close and personal-like an adult Henslow's sparrow in the garden plots at Kingsmill. This species is rare even in its breeding area and is a real plum for listers. What would Fall be like without a rarity from Kingsmill? Also present in the area were magnolia, yellow and black and white warblers.

On the same day (September 28) Brian Taber came up with another first. He saw and heard a yellow-bellied flycatcher in the College Woods. We had a previous undetailed sighting from the Jolly Pond area two springs ago. However, some uncertainty existed. Brian's record substantiates the presence of this rare migrant in our area. He also observed gray-cheeked thrushes and blackpolls. On October 8 Brian turned up another excellent find for the College Woods with a Philadelphia Vireo. Unbelievable!

The goodie list goes on. Leigh Jones was party to a peregrine falcon attack on pigeon flocks near the Gospel Spreading Farm off the Colonial Parkway near Jamestown on September 19. This sighting is our fourth for this endangered raptor. What a show!

How would you like to get an excellent view of a red-shouldered hawk? One can be regularly observed sitting on the telephone lines adjacent to the Williamsburg Country Club. It's a beautiful adult and makes a striking figure as it scans the field for prey. Check it out.

Hawk watching at Kiptopeke on the Eastern Shore has been record breaking. On three separate dates over 2000 raptors have been counted. All time state records for ospreys (178) and kestrels (686) have been set recently and a sharp-shin count of over 3000 may establish a state mark too. An effort to put in 200 hours of counting this fall may come up short, but the experience for those who have been helping has been breathtaking. In addition to the thousands of sharp-shins there have been harriers, broadwings, merlins, coopers hawks, bald eagles and peregrine falcons. Huge flights of blue jays and flickers have taken place, and many migrant warblers have flown by. Stops on the bridge tunnel islands on the homeward journey have produced great cormorants (6 maximum), lesser black-backed gull, vesper, seaside and white-crowned sparrows. Nashville, black-throated blue, magnolia and palm warblers and house wrens, brown creepers and a friendly, exhausted red-breasted nuthatch that landed on a pants leg! Call Bill Williams if you want to do some raptor watches.

Sora rails continue to whine in the local fresh water marshes including up to 3 at College Creek on October 1.

Hog Island apparently is sporting lots of shorebirds including stilt sandpipers.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology Board meeting will take place November 6. If you have concerns let Tom Armour know.

ASK OWL:

The name gallinule comes from a Latin term, gallina, meaning little hen.

The Cooper's hawk is named for William Cooper, an American zoologist in the 1820's. He was founder of the New York Lyceum of Natural History and travelled extensively.