

THE WILLIAMSBURG FLYER

December 1984

Hark! the herald titmice sing, "count those birds which take to wing; geese on earth and turkeys wild, ducks and robins are compiled. "Joyful all ye birders rise. Join the triumph of the skies."

Taking some liberties with a Christmas favorite serves as advertisement for December's bird club event. There will be no club meeting this month. Instead we will hold our annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. As outlined in last month's newsletter, this census, sponsored by the National Audubon Society, is an attempt to count as many individuals of as many avian species as can be located within a specified 15 mile diameter circle during a 24 hour calendar day. The Williamsburg count circle is centered at the Colonial Information Center. The circle is divided into 8 areas; Cheatham Annex, Kingsmill, Jamestown, Hog Island, College Woods, Jolly Pond, Skimino and Middle Plantation. Each area has a designated leader who will muster a crew of volunteers to cover every nook and cranny looking for any and every bird available. The area leaders then compile their findings which are then added to the compilations from other areas to get our final tally. Generally the Williamsburg count runs between 100-110 species. If you are interested in participating in any way with the count here are the details.... The count date is Sunday December 16 (we choose Sunday because of the excessive hunting throughout most of our area on Saturdays, especially on the military installations). Although many people will be out well before dawn, everyone is asked to assemble at 7:00 a.m. at the Colonial Williamsburg Information Center parking lot on the Colonial Parkway side of the Center. Final group assignments will be made then. The compilation for the day will be at 5:00 p.m. in room 108 of Millington Hall on the William and Mary campus. All participants are asked to pay \$3.00 (notice the change from previous years) to defray the publication cost of this massive continent-wide effort. I can't emphasize enough how much we need help afield and at home. Feeder Counts are a must for a successful count. In years past we haven't gotten as much assistance in this area as we could. Also, birding all day makes for the hungries. If you can assist the tired and weary by bringing some finger foods to the compilation it would be greatly appreciated. Please call Bill Williams (229-0098 or 565-0373) if you plan to participate in the count. Leaders are needed for Hog Island and Kingsmill.

Here's a list of some other bird counts you might want to get in on:

Newport News and Hopewell	Saturday December 15
Cape Hatteras	Thursday December 27
Bodie - Pea Island	Friday December 28
Back Bay and Chincoteague	Saturday December 29
Cape Charles	Sunday December 30
Little Creek	Monday December 31

Please give season's greetings to our newest bird clubbers Barry Ensley and Billie Hildreth.

The October Bird Savings Day dust has almost settled. The club generated about \$1,800. profit at the final assessment. Fred Blystone did the lion's share of the task but special thanks should also go to Donna Middleton, Joanne Brown, Tim Kinkead, Chuck Rosenberg, Bob Brown, Grant Olson, Tom Armour, Bob Cross, Dave West, Dick Hines, Kyle Dupuis, Julie Hotchkiss, Jewel Thomas, Bob Long, Brian Taber, Carolyn Lowe for their help with dispensing the orders and unloading the seed. Alice Springe, Jewel Thomas, Bill Sheehan and Leigh Jones contributed immensely by telephoning people to remind them of the seed pick-up.

Fred still has some seed available including thistle and suet and also has Droll Yankee sunflower and thistle feeders for sale. Order forms for the mid-winter Bird Seed Savings Day will go out around January 1st. As usual at least two order forms will go to everyone in hopes you will share one with a friend or neighbor.

We've all become used to and excited by the antics of hummingbirds attracted by red-dyed sugar water at many local homes. It seems that the hummers find many brightly colored objects attractive and thus has created some serious problems for them. In some parts of the country red plastic insulators are used to cover electrical wires. The birds are being attracted to them and subsequently get electrocuted. Nineteen such fatalities were recorded last fall in Missouri and a report of this hazard prompted the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to ask the company which made the insulators to stop using red.

While the aforementioned represents one of the many plagues man levels at birds, how about a little turn-about-is-fair-play news from the birds. Seagulls at a Massachusetts golf ball driving range have been mistaking the balls for clams, which they love to drop from above on hard surfaces to break open. The birds created such havoc that they literally ran the golfers off the range. The gulls showed no preference for colors either, as they went for white, red or green balls with equal enthusiasm. I guess you just don't want to get gulls teed off or maybe they know the truth about the missing links or that's the problem when gulls clam up or.....maybe they're just having (are you ready) a ball -- or

On the home front, water pipits and Bonaparte's gulls have been seen regularly over the Chickahominy River since early November. A hermit thrush was in full song on Yarmouth Creek November 25. Thom Blair was in town over Thanksgiving and was able to locate a pheasant near College Creek. These birds away from the Cheatham Annex area are very unusual over the last five years. Ty and Julie Hotchkiss reported a fox sparrow at First Colony over the turkey holiday and they also spotted a late western kingbird at the Yorktown Battlefield on November 28 as well as 25 turkeys.

Three fulvous whistling ducks were found at Back Bay November 17 by David Hughes of Norfolk. While attempts to find them afterwards were futile they turned up again in the same location near False Cape State Park and were seen by a few birders during the Nov. 30-Dec. 2 VSO field trip to Back Bay. Rich Goll, Cindy Fletcher, Brian Taber and Fenton Day were among those to see these rare visitors to Virginia. Also seen on the trip were red-throated and common loons, snow buntings, gannets, sedge wrens, a merlin and both royal and Forster's terns. The Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel has had a pair of harlequin ducks, common and king eiders and up to a half-dozen lesser black-backed gulls.

A snowy owl and a possible Ross' goose have been reported from Chincoteague, and a strange white, fat, peregrine-like falcon has been seen at Kiptopeke by Margaret Abbott on two separate days in November.

Winter finches and feeder birds in general have been almost non-existent from all reports. Red-breasted nuthatches are a definite rarity.

Ask Owl: MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY 1985!

A banded black skimmer was recently mist netted in Florida and when records were checked on its band number the bird was found to be six weeks short of 20 years old!

We are now a tax exempt organization. Details on this benefit will appear in January. How appropriate!